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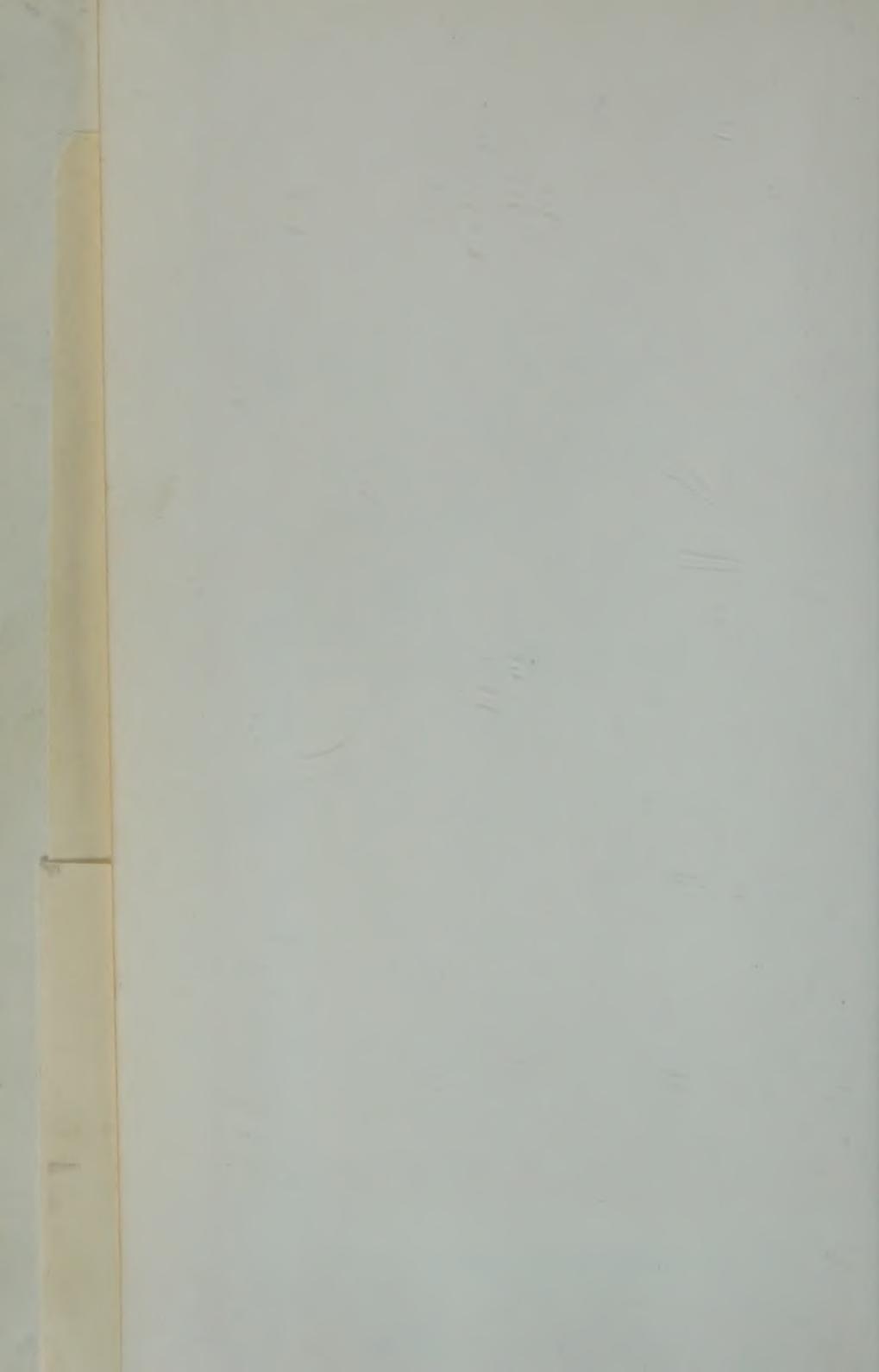
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Typical New Testament Conversions

BY

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"Our Redemption."*



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TO

DR. G. S. F. SAVAGE,

A CONNECTICUT PURITAN, A PIONEER
CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER OF ILLINOIS,

A FATHER IN ISRAEL,

A MAN WHOSE WISDOM IS UNFAILING

AND WHOSE FRIENDSHIP IS A

PERPETUAL BENEDICTION

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INTRODUCTION.

Two factors enter into the conversion of souls. One is divine, the other is human. God draws; the man yields. God invites; the man accepts. God broods over the heart with the influences of the Spirit as over the old chaos; man responds to these influences by an act of will and becomes a new creation.

But while there is this two-fold operation, a co-working of the divine and human in all cases of genuine conversion, it is to be borne in mind that the actual experiences of men in turning from sin to righteousness, or to the purpose to live a righteous life, differ very greatly. Education, environment, temperament, condition of mind, occupations, associations, habits, past life, cherished ambitions, forms in which arguments are addressed to the understanding and appeals are made to the will, all enter into the question and aid, one or more of them, in giving character to the inward emotions and outward expressions which accompany salvation in any particular instance. In all these experiences there will be the substantial likeness shown in the trunks of a forest of oaks; but at the same time, the wide variety displayed in the shape of the branches and leaves of the individual trees.

It is to set forth this fact of the differences there may be in the special considerations which lead up to

faith in Christ, and in the feelings which are associated with active surrender to the divine will, and in the ways in which this change will make itself manifest, that these specific cases of conversion which are brought to our knowledge in the New Testament, and which may be considered typical cases, have been carefully studied and arranged in the order in which they are now presented in this volume.

There is a deeper question than the one here submitted, and a question which calls for the most serious confronting on the part of all earnest adherents of evangelical religion. It is the question whether conversion ought any longer to be held to be a necessity and whether consequently it is worth while to spend time and strength in trying to persuade men to accept Christ after the old fashioned method of our Lord's time and the time of the Apostles. In the estimation of numbers, and of increasing numbers it is plain, the ethics of the gospel is all that is required.

But in these pages it is taken for granted that the moral and spiritual condition of men today is what it was for substance when Jesus came into the world to be the Light of the world and the Saviour of the lost nineteen hundred years ago. To my thought, the most pressing need of our time is the conversion of men to the faith and life of Jesus Christ.

The plan pursued in these discourses has been to tell the story of each individual conversion exactly as the Scripture account warrants, and just as if the individual in hand were the only one of which there is any record. It is in this way, and through this absolute

wality to each separate narrative, that the variety in
experience has been brought out.

The object had in view in the original conception
and preparation of these discourses was a double one.
It was first and incidentally to suggest a caution to
such ministers as may need it, and to such Christian
workers as are apt to think and sometimes to insist
that the experience of others in coming into the life
of believers must conform to their own experience.
That there is call for this hint is painfully evident
when one listens to appeals which are now and then
made and to statements of conditions on which the
soul may find acceptance with Christ.

It was in the second place to carry comfort to the
hearts of those—never very few—who are all the
time doubting whether they are truly regenerated be-
cause their exercises of mind and their feelings have
been so unlike those of other people whom they know,
and whose passing into newness of life can never be
open to question.

But, as John has told us, there are many gates into
the Holy City. Whether one enters by the east gate
or the west, by the north gate or the south, is of small
concern, if only one succeeds in entering. The experi-
ence may or may not be the duplicate of some other
person's experience. The real question is whether one
has had an experience which has taken him out of
sin and the love of sin into the faith and fellowship of
the Son of God.

If the re-telling of these stories of Typical New
Testament Conversions in the form here given shall
lead to a fresh awakening of the mind of even a few

INTRODUCTION.

of the ministers and members of our evangelical churches to the fact of the number of conversions whose records are furnished in the Gospels and Acts and then to the individuality of experience through which these different converts passed in making the way out into the light and joy of salvation, the purpose of this book will be accomplished.

F. A. NOBLE.

Union Park Church, March 17, 1901.

MATTHEW—THE PUBLICAN.

*"And as Jesus passed by from thence, He saw
man, called Matthew, sitting at the place of toll; and
He saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and fo-
lowed Him." —Matt. 9:9.*

MATTHEW—THE PUBLICAN.

The "Matthew" of this passage, beyond any reasonable doubt, is identical with the "Levi" of Mark and Luke. In the different accounts of what occurred in calling the publican, two different names are employed: but they both refer to one and the same person. It is not impossible that there should have been two publicans called to the following of Christ at the same time and at the same place and under circumstances which in all respects were so remarkably similar, but it is altogether improbable.

Besides, the two names involve us in no special difficulties. It was not uncommon, as Bruce in his *Training of the Twelve* has stated, and as other writers and commentators also have made clear, for a person who had become a disciple of Jesus to assume or receive a new name in token of the change which had been wrought in his views and feelings and aims. "Simon," the son of Jonas, became "Peter." "Saul" of Tarsus, the bitter persecutor, became "Paul." "Joses" became "Barnabas." "Levi" gave way to "Matthew." "Levi" was the name, doubtless, by which the man was known in his own household and among his friends and neighbors and by the business world, up to the time of the call to discipleship; but after that the name which was dearest to him and by which he himself at any rate chose to be designated was

"Matthew." The meaning of this new name is God's Gift. When Matthew thought of what had come to him through the free grace of God in Christ he might well cherish the sweet and constant memorial of it in the name he bore.

(1) The initial interest in this call and following of Matthew,—or what is the same thing—the conversion of Matthew, lies in the fact that he was a publican.

The publican was a tax-gatherer. Such publicans as are mentioned in the New Testament were the local agents of syndicates or monopolists whose headquarters were at Rome, and whose function it was to collect revenues for the government,—or rather for themselves, since these chief men paid the government a lump sum, and through their representatives worked the provinces for all that was in them, in order to replace the investments made and secure immense profits beside. Hence the publican was in the highest degree obnoxious to the people of his district. He was obnoxious not only on account of his office, but on account of his character as well. For the publican belonged to a class that, in general, was utterly unscrupulous and cruelly exacting. He unhesitatingly overcharged whenever he had a chance. He trumped up accusations against business men that he might use these accusations to extort blackmail. He opened letters on pretense of suspicion that plots had been formed and schemes were in operation for defrauding the state. Every device known to the cunning manipulators of gain was adopted and put in operation by the publican.

In Judea and Galilee there were circumstances to

gravate the contempt in which the publican was held. In the view of the church he was an excommunicated person. He was an apostate from the people of God. On all hands he was considered an instrument of oppression; and he had all the hate without any of the respect usually accorded to a tyrant. His baseness became a proverb, and his name on the lips of all the more respectable members of the community was a reproach.

Nevertheless, it was Matthew, the publican, whom the Lord called. Belonging to a despised order of men; regarded with supreme contempt and burning scorn by all who loved their country and were loyal to what they supposed the ecclesiastical and patriotic traditions of the past demanded at their hands; without scholarship, so far as we are permitted to know; and not only without standing in cultivated and controlling circles, and without influence in the prospect of being able to exert influence in the immediate future, but a man who at the outset, at least, would be sure to bring discredit to the cause he was asked to espouse, it was yet this same publican to whom Jesus addressed the invitation to become His follower. Low down and hated to the point of being a byword in the mouths of the people, still Jesus did not hesitate to say to him: "Follow Me."

Jesus, beyond any question, saw two things in Matthew, and on the basis of these two things He called him into discipleship.

First, He saw his need of the great salvation. This need he shared with all others who were about him, whatever their rank in society or their vocation or

their race. It was this need which He came into the world to meet. If the man was a sinner, as he was—if he was a very great sinner, as he was—this only put him the more directly in line with Our Lord's mission; for he was here to seek and to save that which was lost. "They that are whole," or strong, "have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." "I can not to call the righteous, but sinners." Nothing ever appealed to Jesus like the moral and spiritual need of man. Looking in on the soul with the clear vision of the divine eye, all our petty, earthly distinctions faded out to the thought of Jesus, and His supreme desire was to lead all lost ones back into light and life.

For a second thing, Jesus saw in Matthew remarkable possibilities. To the people at large he was only a miserable publican, with just ability enough to count gold and silver out of the sweat of honest faces and make his office yield him rich harvests of ill-gotten wealth. In the estimation and foresight of the Master he was endowed with rare qualities both of mind and heart, and needed only to be turned in the right direction and filled with the right kind of inspiration to be of inestimable service to the kingdom and to the world. He realized that in calling this man into His fellowship He would be calling one who would be not alone an intelligent and devoted disciple, but an apostle as well, and the writer of an immortal Gospel. Think what we should miss, think what would have been the loss to mankind down through all these centuries, had there been no Gospel according to Matthew. It was all lying there latent—the discipleship, the apostleship, and the authorship—in the Matthew who

at at the place of toll. The eyes of the world were
olden, but Jesus, who knew what was in men, saw
hat could be made out of this publican, and He
alled him to assist in laying the foundations of the
ew faith and establishing the new order of righteous-
ess.

It was another instance of which there are so many
n history. A foolish thing, according to our human
ay of thinking, was chosen to put to shame the wis-
om of the wise. A weak thing was picked up and
sed to confound the strong. A base thing and a
ning despised was employed to work a revolution in
thought and life, and to bring pride and self-conceit
o naught.

We sometimes overestimate men; but there are
large numbers who have very much more in them
han anything they have yet said or done would lead
s to suspect. Farrar has a passage in which he says:
Each human soul is like a cavern full of gems. The
usual observer glances into it through some cranny,
nd all looks dark and sullen. But let light enter into
t, lift a torch up to its walls, let God's sunlight fall
into it and flood its open recesses, and lo! it will flash
with crystals and with amethysts, and each separate
ystal will quiver under the touch of brightness with
transporting discovery of its own nature."

This is unquestionably true. There are multitudes
f persons—men and women alike—who need only to
e awakened and warmed into a consciousness of their
owers and possibilities, or to come themselves into
his consciousness, in order to spring at once into
onspicuous usefulness, and make society better at all

points at which they touch it. There are men in plenty giving their lives to bad vocations who might be regenerating forces to mankind.

Another point of special interest and instruction in this transaction through which Matthew became a disciple of Jesus is the promptness with which he responded to the call to follow Our Lord.

Jesus was passing by. He saw the man sitting there at the place of toll. He spoke to him,—paused, no doubt, for the purpose of speaking to him. It is easy to imagine—or, rather, it is impossible not to imagine—that there may have been something peculiarly impressive in the manner of Jesus, and a very sweet and tender accent in His voice, at this decisive interview. He said, "Follow Me." He did not argue the case with Matthew. He lodged no accusations against him. He made no promises. He just simply stood there and uttered the words, "Follow Me." The next sentence in the narrative is: "And he arose, and followed Him." Or, as Luke has it: "And he forsook all, and rose up and followed Him." The following was immediate and it was complete.

This is a fact of marked significance. "And he forsook all, and rose up and followed Him." So far as appears, Matthew asked no questions. He offered no objections. He insisted on no conditions. He put in no plea for delay. He did not stay to count up his losses, or the losses he would be likely to incur, if he quit his post of tax-gatherer and joined the unworldly company of the disciples. He brought forward no doubts and questions and puzzling problems. He made no inquiries concerning the rewards which might

wait him. Jesus said, "Follow Me;" and right then and there he followed Him. "He forsook all, and rose up and followed Him." It is one of the beautiful things, as well as one of the suggestive things, in the New Testament story,—the prompt way in which Matthew followed Jesus.

It is not to be supposed that Matthew had had no previous knowledge of the Son of God. A bright, alert man, and open-eyed, as he must have been in order to be at all competent for his position, to everything that was going on about him, it is hardly conceivable that he should not have been aware of the presence of Jesus in Capernaum, and of His words and wonderful works. How long Jesus had been in Capernaum before He uttered His call to Matthew; and how many of His miracles He had performed before this event, we have no means of knowing with any definiteness. But some of these "signs," it is fair to assume, had been wrought before Jesus made His personal appeal to Matthew, and these "signs" having been wrought and brought to the knowledge of the publican, he had his views about them, and quite likely had made up his mind that Jesus was the Messiah and Saviour He claimed to be.

But be this as it may, Jesus extended His gracious invitation to Matthew, and Matthew accepted it and entered at once into the life and service of the Master. From that moment he turned his back on the world, and made the kingdom of heaven the chief object of his care and toil. His obedience was unhesitating and whole-hearted.

This prompt following of Our Lord in response to

His call, which had such signal illustration in the instance of Matthew, is something worthy of universal imitation. There are few men and women—especially in Christian lands—to whom Jesus has not spoken in accents of tender love and appeal. It has not been face to face intercourse, as in the case of the publican; but somehow that same direction has been made to fall on the ear and penetrate to the inmost depths of the soul: “Follow me.” The Word, as often as it has been opened and read, or its sacred instructions recalled, has uttered it. Teachers and preachers and devoted fathers and mothers have made it the burden of their pleadings. Providences innumerable have given it expression; and the still small voice has whispered it to the reason and the conscience. Churches, Sundays, good books, the sense of sin in the heart, the longing for purity and happiness, convictions of duty, are all organs through which divine intimations have been given of what is God’s wish and of what must be done to be in accord with God. Jesus comes to us all in many guises, and He has multitudinous ways of inviting us to follow Him. How wise it would be, when thus invited, to do as Matthew did, and forsake all and rise up and obey His call at once. The glory of the publican’s action was its promptness. He did instantly what he ought to have done.

Why not imitate this conduct? Why not fall in with this “Follow Me” of the Master, and enter immediately on the life of a disciple?

Doubtless there will be something to “forsake.” But there will be nothing to forsake which it is not better to forsake. Matthew forsook all. Yet what was this

!?" What did he forsake? He forsook a business which a self-respecting man could not well engage. forsook a post where the temptations to scheming oppression and dishonesty were nearly overwhelm-. He forsook associations and influences which were a drag on his soul. But was it not better for him to forsake these things? What he forsook was nothing in comparison with what he gained by following Christ.

So it is always. Whatever any man has to give up in order to follow Christ better be given up. The sooner any necessary sacrifice is made and the following is begun, the greater the reward and the joy.

Observe, now, what Matthew did as soon as he had accepted the call of Jesus to discipleship.

He threw open his house and gathered large numbers to a feast. Let us recall the account of the whole transaction as given in the third gospel. "And after these things he went forth, and beheld a publican, named Levi, sitting at the place of toll, and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he forsook all, and rose and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his house, and there was a great multitude of publicans and of others that were sitting at meat with them. And the Pharisees and their Scribes murmured against His disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician; but they that are sick. I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

In arranging this feast and making it as sumptuous

as wealth could provide, Matthew, no doubt, had three ends in view.

First of all, he wanted to honor Jesus. Not many of those who were called into the fellowship of Our Lord had the means to meet the expenses of a splendid entertainment. This publican was rich, and he planned at the very outset to make his money contribute to the magnifying of Jesus. This was one of the ways in which he could pay homage to Him who had called him. The Wise Men of the East brought their treasures of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Mary bestowed on Him her precious ointment. Matthew made for him a feast, and invited large numbers to come and meet Him. For a publican to do this, in a city like Capernaum, was a distinguished tribute to the Son of Man.

In the second place, Matthew wanted to give expression to his own satisfaction in having found his way into the light and life of the Son of God. He had a profound sense of obligation to Jesus for having called him into His communion and work. He had secured deliverance from sin, and was no longer under bondage to a tormenting conscience. He had caught a new inspiration, and life was no longer to be the hard, grinding, and cheerless affair it had been in the past. He has been taken from the service of a government that was cruel and extortionate and rotten to the core, and established in service under a Leader who went about doing good, and who announced it as His purpose to conquer by love and to draw all men unto Him. It seemed fit to Matthew to give some real token to the world of the way he felt.

Had Matthew been a poet, it is not unlikely he might have set forth his gratitude in flowing numbers. Had he been an orator, he might have told his story from some public platform. Had he been a painter, he might have reproduced the scene on canvas, and in the glow of his face have shown what fountains of joy had been opened in his heart. But he was a business man, with the habits and methods and aptitudes of a business man; so he did just what men like himself were accustomed to do and knew exactly how to do,—he made a great feast.

It was a fit thing for this publican to give expression to his sense of obligation to Jesus for the measureless boon of forgiveness he had received from Him, and for opening to him a place of service and honor in His kingdom. In some way equally positive and unequivocal every redeemed sinner ought to show his attitude.

In the third place, we seem to be at liberty to infer that Matthew wanted to turn his feast to account by making an opportunity for others—friends and acquaintances and possibly business associates of his—to meet Jesus and hear from His own lips what message He had for them, and what He conceived to be His mission in the world. If this conjecture is right, and this motive had any place in the origination of the feast, then the intent of Matthew is eminently praiseworthy. For there is so little enthusiasm in the high business of bringing men face to face with Christ and His truth and winning them to the faith. What more in accord with every Christian propriety, and what would be more promising, than for disciples of Jesus, while yet in the

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flush of their early discipleship, to gather together circles of outsiders, and bear testimony which shall open to them the saving grace of Jesus?

This is what was realized at Matthew's feast. Publicans and sinners were there; and Scribes and Pharisees, though not participating in the entertainment somehow had access to the company, and through the questions and criticisms of these latter Jesus found the way open for announcing some of His most precious truths. The words have been before us once or twice already, but let us take them on our lips again. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." "I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." Scorned by the community; burdened by a sense of their own unworthiness; yet conscious, many of them, of a longing for better things, with what unspeakable delight must these publicans and sinners have heard these words falling from the mouth of Jesus! To them these words were the charter of spiritual liberty.

This, then, is what we have in the call and following of Matthew. A man excommunicated by the church, and excluded from the circles of the more reputable people of the community, is specially invited by Our Lord into discipleship, and in due time is advanced into the calling of the Twelve Apostles. This was the way Jesus had of setting aside our pride and culture distinctions, and striking down through the out-fencing traditions of men, and emphasizing the simple fact of soul-hood. It is not whether he is a Pharisee or a publican, whether he is inside or outside our little ex-

ve coterie; but is he a man? If he is a man, or poor, high or low, Jesus is here to save him, will save him if He can. Nor is there any man so way, nor so deep in the mire, that Our Lord does yearn to reach him, and put him in the way of did service and immortal glory.

BLIND BARTIMAEUS.

"And they come to Jericho: and as He went o
from Jericho, with His disciples and a great multitud
the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, w
sitting by the wayside. And when he heard that
was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and sa
Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. An
many rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; b
he cried out the more a great deal, Thou Son of Davi
have mercy on me. And Jesus stood still, and sai
Call ye him. And they call the blind man, sayin
unto him, Be of good cheer; rise, He calleth thee. An
he, casting away his garment, sprang up, and came
Jesus. And Jesus answered him, and said, What w
thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind ma
said unto Him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.
And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way. Thy faith ha
made thee whole. And straightway he received h
sight, and followed Him in the way." Mark 10:46-5

II.

BLIND BARTIMAEUS.

ericho, the scene of the interview and healing and owing recorded in this narrative, was about eight miles westward from the banks of the Jordan, and aething like fifteen miles to the northward of Jerum. Even in Our Lord's day it was an old historic town, comparatively large in numbers, beautiful for situation, and resplendent with wealth.

Many events of great interest are associated with its name. Here Joshua achieved his first signal victory over the conquest of Canaan. Close by, in its mountain fastnesses, the Sons of the Prophets sought retirement from the world. Over against this place, across the river, Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Here Elisha with his cruise of salt healed the spring waters. In its plains, Zedekiah with his host was overthrown and captured by the Chaldeans. Pompey assailed the Romans against it, and battering down the towers which commanded its approaches, he encamped within its lines, and took of its gathered treasures of silver and gold to swell his spoils of war. Here the cruel Herod made his home,—or if he did not reside here habitually, hither he came to die. It has been conjectured that the rocky heights overhanging Jericho were the scene of Our Lord's temptation. Between this city and Jerusalem is located the imperishable memory of the Good Samaritan. It was in this town that

Jesus partook of the hospitality of the publican Zacchaeus.

Jericho seems to have been a wealth-center, and for men of all classes attractive and popular. The hill about it afforded a good measure of security. The valleys which stretched away on either hand were fertile and it was fed with abundance of choice supplies. Its air was soft with tropical warmth. As here in America we have our "Elm Cities," our "Forest Cities," and our "Lake Cities;" so they called Jericho "The City of Palms," "The Place of Fragrance." It was a place eagerly coveted by the officials. Unscrupulous tax-gatherers were able to extort large revenues and make themselves suddenly rich from its palm-trees and balsam-gardens.

It is at this city that the narrative locates Jesus. The end was drawing nigh. He had completed what we may call the several circuits of His popular preaching. The most of His miracles had been wrought. Many things remained yet to be said and to be done. But the time was close at hand when the solemn scenes of Calvary were to have enactment, and the resurrection was to become a precious fact of history, and when the whole record, from Annunciation to Ascension, with all the suffering involved, and all the light and hope which were in it for mankind, was to be made up to stand forever.

The narrative in its details is not without difficulty; and there are statements made concerning the circumstances and place and order in which events occurred which it is not easy to reconcile. But what follows cannot be very wide of the facts of the case.

eady Jesus was on the way to His triumphal into Jerusalem. Reaching the city, with the e, late in the afternoon of the preceding day, ad spent the night in Jericho. On this morning ad set out on His strange journey. About Him multitudes. The way was thronged. For He fallen into the direct track of the great companies were pressing down from the North, and hurry- on to be ready to celebrate the Passover at the of the following week.

He went out of the city there was a sudden It in the crowd. A shout as from some one beside self was heard. Protested against, this shout was ted until it became boisterous. The disciples in g to hush it, themselves grew noisy. It was one crying, "Mercy," "Mercy." It was many voices g, "Silence," "Silence." The suppliant was a man by the name of Bartimaeus. He was not blind, but poor. He was a beggar,—for some n a conspicuous member of his class, and well n, doubtless, throughout the city. The attention sus was arrested. He stopped. How character- of Him when help was sought! He stopped, stood and simply said "Call him." They did call him. prang up on receiving the invitation, rushed into presence of Jesus, told Him what he wanted, got d then, with seeing eyes and a renewed heart, fell fine and became a follower of Jesus. How grate- and eager and devoted a follower it is easy to ine.

ese are the outside facts in the story of the way- beggar, and they show us under what circum-

stances he passed from both physical and spiritual blindness to clear seeing.

But in emphasizing the facts peculiar to the conversion of Blind Bartimaeus, or if not altogether him, to the class to which he belongs, we have only linger a little longer and go a little deeper into the details of the story to see how he reached the point of restored sight and a renewed soul.

First, then, Bartimaeus discovered and seized his opportunity to get help from Jesus.

This was the secret of his success, and the turning point in the unspeakable good he obtained.

In all probability he had heard many times of Jesus of Nazareth. He was just such a man as would be likely to hear, and to whom what he heard would stick. For three years the Christ had been traversing the land, speaking marvelous words, and working marvelous cures. His fame was in everybody's mouth. Hardly a circle could there be in which His merits were not canvassed. The infirm, the lame, the sick, the palsied, the deaf, the blind, would be sure to have tidings of His doings brought to them. The son of Timaeus, from his demonstrative nature, and from his constant contact with strangers, would be quite certain to get hold of such news. Having this knowledge which came through the hearing of the ear, one might well conjecture what his thoughts may have been as he sat there day after day under the shadow of some palm tree,—especially how intense his emotions would become on learning that Jesus was actually in the city and so near to his call.

That he had heard of Him before; that he had re-

ed on the matter and made up his mind that Jesus Nazareth was really the long expected Messiah, and in some important sense was divine, is clear from address he used. For he did not appeal to Him Jesus of Nazareth, but as Jesus, the Son of David. had come to the conclusion that this man could in his eyes. Hence, just as soon as he knew that s was passing by he put in his petition; and he it in strong. Up to that time he had had no opportunity; a few moments later, and his opportunity would gone forever. It was just then and there or never; just then and there he laid hold of his one chance secured the blessing he coveted. His eyes were ed and his soul was saved.

How wise he was—this way-side beggar! What art it is to be able to discern the signs of the times tell what the stroke of the clock means for us! t is one of the remarkable distinctions between . Some men are quick and some are slow to diser and grasp opportunities. It is so in youth; it is in manhood. It is so in reference to learning, to ufacturing, to trade, to war. It is so in all spheres life. If one moves on with the tide, he wins suc- ; if not, not.

Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. It was the gold-moment for Blind Bartimaeus to put in his plea. saw his chance and made his move.

How often one hears the lament,—sometimes from who, when boys, might have been educated, but ishly preferred to grow up in ignorance; sometimes from men who had better counsels, but thought y knew it all and ran off into reckless dissipation;

sometimes from men who had fine openings in business, but who dallied and loitered till the opening was closed, or somebody else had entered it,—the lament “Oh, if I had only known!” or: “If I had only been quick and wise to lay hold on my chance!”

Over their souls more frequently than over any other interests do men have occasion to utter these laments. Uttering these laments over souls—over their own souls—is to utter them where they are the most dreadful. “If thou hadst known in this thy day even thou, the things which belong unto peace; but now are they hid from thine eyes.”

(2) A second fact to be observed is that Blind Bartimaeus forced his way over all obstructions.

It is a suggestive incident that the chief difficulties encountered by this way-side beggar in approaching Christ were created by the disciples. One would suppose they would have encouraged such an appeal,—all the more as the man was in special need, and in addition to this used words which implied his faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. One would suppose they would have been glad to see the divine power and love illustrated in the presence of the multitudes by the opening of the eyes of this poor unfortunate victim of blindness.

But here as on other occasions the disciples seemed to feel that they must guard the dignity of Christ. There was something, too, in the character of this particular applicant, or in his manner of appeal, which offended their sense of propriety. For one thing, he was too eager, too loud in his cryings. They had their notions of what the proper way of coming to Christ

s, and men must come that way. But here was a man, who, by his downright earnestness, was violating their fine canons of taste. Instead, therefore, of saying; "Good! Here is a suppliant who is conscious of his need, and who is determined to let Jesus know it everybody know that he is in dead earnest in seeking relief;" and then following this up by taking him by the hand and leading him tenderly to the One who could minister help, all it occurred to the disciples to say and to do was to try to get the poor fellow to keep still. As he cried out for the touch of the healing hand, they cried out "Hush!"

Hence things stood out in sharp contrasts. It was the clamor of preconceived notions against the humor of faith and deep need. It was dignity against white-hot earnestness. It was formality against the impulse of the heart. It was the selfishness and conceit of men, who, for the moment, had forgotten what was the purpose of the Master, against the convictions of a soul who felt and knew that, if this were the Christ, mercy must be the central quality of Him. As between His followers and their Lord, it was a narrow exclusiveness against an open-hearted and open-handed spirit of love for all. The real feeling, no doubt, was that this was a rude and ill-timed and ill-mannered way of trying to get assistance from the Son of God.

Alas, that there should still be not a little of this wedging up of the way, and making it harder for poor souls to secure approach to the presence of the Lord. Nor do we not each of us have our ideas of the fit way for sinners to come to the Saviour, and that no

other ways are quite so fit as our way? Do we not say: "These are the influences which ought to operate?" "These are the motives which ought to control?" "These are the arguments to which the reason ought to yield?" "These are the states of mind which ought to characterize new-born souls?" "These are the outward signs which ought to be shown, and the evidences by which to judge that one has actually passed from death unto life?" If one comes quietly into the kingdom, there are those who will shake their heads and say: "We don't know about this; we like a little more emotion." If one comes with considerable demonstration, there are still others who will shake their heads and say: "We are suspicious of excitement; we prefer the feeling that is silent." If one is constrained by the love of Christ, and runs into the divine arms as a trusting child runs into the arms of a mother, are there not those who will express fear lest the work cannot be genuine? If one's thoughts have been aroused by dwelling on the terrors of the law, and the main concern seems to be to escape the wrath to come, are not hands lifted up in holy horror, as if it were preposterous and well-nigh an insult to the divine character to be thus influenced toward God and the fellowship of God?

When the subject is thoroughly opened out, it is found that we all have our little private conceptions of the proper method of coming to Christ, and of the proper experiences to accompany this coming. These we erect into standards of judgment. The result is that there is always somebody to look doubtful, and to

g back, and to question suspiciously, whatever
ns are adopted to reach Christ.

ut this is all wrong. God's ways of working are
nifold. Temperaments are almost infinite in va-
y. Times differ. The Holy Spirit is not shut up
ne narrow method. The human heart has a thou-
l keys which may be touched by the divine finger.
s not for us to say which shall be played upon. God
y draw out his music as he will. The thing is to
men fairly and fully committed to God, and into
mony with God. If this man can be influenced
ough his feelings, let him be so influenced. What
the feelings for? If this man can be better reached
ough the reason, be it so. What is the reason for?
this man can be approached best through his con-
cience, well again. What is the conscience for? If
s man has made up his mind and arrived at his
termination through prudential considerations, who
all say him nay? For what are these prudential—
ese forecasting and balancing—faculties for? If
is one comes quietly and easily, let him come. If
is one comes timidly, with apparent hesitancy, and
ly after much drawing, let him come. If this one
forward, confident, joyous, so that he even shouts,
t him come.

Some who came to Jesus, came only when He had
illed them. He was glad to have them come, or He
ould not have called them. Nicodemus came by
ight. He was welcomed. The woman whom He
ealed crept so stealthily into His presence that no
ie noticed her when she touched His garment. Jesus
ent her away healed and in peace.

Bartimaeus made his wants known in a cry that was boisterous. Christ did for him what he asked. It is not the manner of the coming: it is the coming which is the important thing.

This was what was in the heart of our wayside beggar—a sincere and determined resolve to force himself on the attention of Jesus. Be the obstruction what they might, let the opposition come from what source it would, his cry should not be silenced; but his wants should be made known to the One Person who could set him right. When the disciples said “Be quiet,” he only lifted his voice the louder, and kept on with his vociferous appeal for mercy till he heard the assuring words: “Be of good comfort; rise He calleth thee.”

Are there obstacles in your way, my brother? Then let the high resolve that was in Bartimaeus be in you—the resolve to reach Jesus in spite of all obstructions—and the alert ear of Our Divine Lord will catch your cry, and He will wait on you, and heal and bless.

In the third place, Bartimaeus, when called, laid aside all hindrances.

He would allow nothing personal to himself to burden and impede him when there was such an interest at stake as seeing—seeing physically and seeing spiritually. “And he, casting away his garment, sprang up and came to Jesus.”

One smiles, it may be, to think anybody can find significance in a little act like this of throwing off an outer wrap or mantle. It was a little thing, it is true, but the act had great meaning in it nevertheless. It reminds us of that Scripture which at the time had

been written: "Therefore let us also . . . lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily ent us, and let us run with patience the race that is before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith."

This garment which was cast aside was only a beggar's cloak,—a beggar's cloak, in all likelihood, torn and worn and soiled to filthiness. But it was all he had. This poor wrap, miserable as it might have been, stood for a large part of his worldly substance. It stood for his home premises. It stood for his bank account. It stood for his corner lots. It stood for his herds of cattle and his flocks of sheep. It stood for his looms. It stood for his store of goods. It

was what came between him and storms—that garment which he threw off and left. He could not be even a comfortable and decent beggar without it. Quite likely he was known afar by the color and cut of that garment. All the same he flung it off and went on without it.

Why? Simply because he was determined nothing could come between him and a free and quick running after Jesus. As he had not permitted himself to be daunted or discouraged by the obstacles which others had sought to throw in his way, but had resolutely mastered them, now that he had heard the voice of the Son of David calling him,—or at any rate the voice of the disciples assuring him that the Son of David was calling him, nothing in himself, or about himself, could be allowed to be a hindrance to him. He cast away his garment, as men eminent for their culture and standing are often constrained to cast away their

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rags of self-righteousness, and sprang forward, as everything depended on the haste with which pressed his way into the presence of Jesus.

Something like this falls to the lot of all who would have moral and spiritual vision restored to their soul. Not the garment; but the thing which that old coat of the way-side beggar represents, whatever it may be, is to go. Possibly it is a bad habit. If it is, throw it aside. Possibly it is a bad association. It is not the skill of man to break such a chain of bondage too quickly. Possibly it is excessive timidity, or excessive pride,—the one should be overcome and the other crushed out as soon as may be. Possibly it is ambition. This needs to be conquered a good deal more than that old coat needed to be thrown off. Possibly it is love of pleasure; or love of riches. But whatever it is, if it hinders movement; if it stays the speed of the soul; if it embarrasses spiritual impulse and outreach, it must be abandoned. This is the way to get the soul clothed with the robes of Christ's righteousness,—throwing off the old and putting on the new.

Possibly there are readers of these words, who, like Bartimaeus, have been long waiting and longing for Jesus. As back there at Jericho, so now, He is passing by. He is always passing by and near at hand when any soul wants Him. The wanting Him is the proof of His nearness and willingness to save. To lay aside all hindrances and press toward Him will be to find Him and get His blessing.

is a fourth fact of significance that Bartimaeus
at once to follow Jesus in the way.

Jesus had just said to him: "Go thy way." So
as his eyes were opened and he realized the mar-
velous change which had been wrought in him, and
whom he was indebted for it, *his way became the*
way of Jesus. "And he followed Him in the way."
joined the company of those who pressed on with
others to Jerusalem. He entered into the fellowship
of believers, and through this fellowship he became a
true witness for Christ.

Singularly enough, a recent writer of marked ability
and commanding position, who evidently thinks that
it is unnecessary to embarrass His cause and lay a
service of defense on His followers in after ages
by working miracles, has asserted there is no evidence
that Bartimaeus ever became a true convert and disci-
ples of Jesus. His exact language is: "Bartimaeus,
when healed, followed Jesus in the way, doubtless full
of gratitude toward Him; but we do not know whether
he ever accepted Jesus as his Saviour." To such ex-
amples will men go with their nice, technical scholars-
hip and their captious criticisms when they start out
with preconceived notions to which all facts must be
adjusted into adjustment. But the distinct statement
is that Bartimaeus "followed" Jesus. He "fol-
lowed Him in the way." Jesus called Himself "the
way." If one were disposed to be sharply technical,
after the manner of our author, it might be asked how
we know that following Jesus "in the way" was not
merely following Jesus in the way of life, and not merely
walking the road on which he was walking. That noth-

ing more is heard of this man is not strange. Men had other things to tell of vastly more importance than tracing the biography of even so marked a convert as Bartimaeus. He related the significant facts that he had been healed of his blindness and had become a follower of Jesus, and then left him.

But Bartimaeus followed on in the way. How he glorified God as he went! Perhaps he sobered down into a quiet disciple. The rather must we think of him, so it seems to me, as one whose enthusiasm and earnestness were sanctified to divine uses, and who was as eager to help others as he was on that memorable occasion when Jesus, the Son of David, was going out of the city, to be helped Himself. It is God's intent, we may be sure, to have all natural qualities and characteristics tuned to His service.

This is the way of safety, of comfort, of strength, and of growth,—this falling in at once and following right along in loving obedience to the will of the Master. If the explanations were sought why many who think they have come into the divine life, and have found life in believing in Jesus, do not develop into more pronounced Christians, and become more useful, and grow into a finer type of character, it would be found in the fact that they do not take up the active duties of disciples, and follow on in the way of the Lord.

It is a law of the Christian life, as it is of all life, that progress and happiness are conditioned on the proper sort of activity. Doing the will leads to knowledge of the doctrine. Knowledge comes; experience comes; aptitude for receiving and commun-

g comes; joy comes; visions of glory come, from
g up duty at once and pushing straight forward
ity-doing.

Jesus was moving toward Jerusalem. The com-
of believers who were with Him were moving
rd Jerusalem. If Blind Bartimaeus, no longer
l, but open-eyed, had waited and said: "This is
oo new to me. I must wait and get used to my-
before taking my place among the pronounced
active followers of Jesus," he would have had no
wship with that circle that pressed on under the
rance of the Son of Man, and no instruction and
iration from these extraordinary associations. It
more than likely he never would have become a
ounced and active follower of Jesus at all. Bar-
tmeus was wise when he cried out with all his might
he Son of David to have mercy on him. He was
as wise when he fell in with Jesus and His dis-
es and loyally followed on in the way in which
is was going.

This conversion is one to impress us anew with a
se—not so much of the marvelous condescension of
us as of the warm and impartial love with which He
ed all classes and conditions of men. To Him souls
re souls whether wrapped under the miserable garb
a beggar or lodged in the bosom of a king. Life
nes to us all from the same source from which Bar-
tmeus derived his life. His helper must be our
per. Our faces are toward the grave and the
igment and an endless destiny, just as his was.
ere will come a time when, so far as this world's
ods and honors are concerned, there will be no

difference between Bartimaeus and all like him, the millionaires and emperors who now fill the world with their fame. His tax schedule will count for as much as those of the merchant princes of Chicago and New York and London. The small esteem in which he might have been held while living will go just as far as the better standing of the most accomplished man of society.

There was never such a Leveler among men as Jesus Christ. But He leveled up and not down. He took the lowest and the poorest and the meanest and exalted them into royalty. "Kings and priests unto God" is what He makes of men. Jesus moved about here and there, and said His word and did His deed, and at once manhood came to mean more and every individual grew taller in his possibilities. He leveled up when He was here on the earth; and He has been leveling up ever since. The new estimate in which man as man is held in this opening year of the next century is the resultant of the new arithmetic which Jesus applied to soul-values. Beggars, blind of eye and blind of heart, can yet be lifted into the light immortal, and made fit for everlasting companionship with saints and angels.

What large numbers of us ought to feel is the same sense of need which moved Bartimaeus. Not blind in the same way he was, we are yet blind, and we remain blind till Jesus gives us vision. This sense of need is with many the supreme need. How pitiable had Bartimaeus been unconscious of his blindness,—or being conscious, had he been indifferent to a cure when there was One so near who with a word could flash

in upon his sightless eyeballs! But what is it to conscious and indifferent with respect to physicalness in comparison with being unconscious and different with respect to spiritual blindness! To be to God! To be blind to eternal verities! To be to the beauty of holiness! To be blind to heaven! To be blind to all the glory of the life to come, to all the glory which may be revealed in us through Christ! What an appalling blindness! It is such an unnecessary blindness, too!

And Jesus stood still, and said, "Call ye him." There was work for the disciples,—"Ye," "Call ye him." They had been throwing obstacles in the way of the notorious blind man; but to their credit, be it said, they obeyed the Master at once. "And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good cheer; rise, saith he. He calleth thee." What a significant and blessed announcement to be able to make to a man: "He calleth thee." But just this is what all true disciples of Our Lord are authorized to say and commissioned to say: "He calleth thee." That is the word to be left lingering in the thought of each soul who is not yet an heir of heaven: "He calleth thee."

LYDIA OF THYATIRA.

*"And on the Sabbath day we went forth with
the gate by a river side, where we supposcd there w
a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake w
the women which were come together. And a cert
woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city
Thyatira, one that worshiped God, heard us; wh
heart the Lord opened, to give heed unto the thin
which were spoken by Paul. And when she was ba
tized, and her household, she besought us, saying:
ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come in
my house, and abide there. And she constrained u*

—Acts 16:13-15.

III.

LADY OF THYATIRA.

Lydia was a Jewish proselyte. Evidently devout by nature and habit, she was walking with God up to the measure of her knowledge and doing her best to serve Him. Born outside the ranks of the Chosen people, and without direct share in the truths and traditions which had come down from Abraham and Moses and the long line of the prophets, she yet accepted the faith of Israel—most likely as soon as it was brought to her attention—and was living a religious life and developing and illustrating a religious character.

Lydia was born at Thyatira, in the province of Asia, the very province, by the way, which the Holy Spirit had forbidden the Apostle to enter—and probably spent most of her time there. It was business which brought her to Philippi. Her native city was famous for its dyeing-works. Purple was a favorite color with the ancients. This included shades ranging all the way “from rose-red to sea-green or blue.” The dye which yielded this color was procured from a certain shell-fish. This woman, who was “a seller of purple,” may have been disposing of the dye, or the cloth which had passed through the coloring process.

Paul had his first introduction to Lydia at a prayer-meeting. It was a good place for good people to meet. Called in a vision to pass over into Macedonia and

preach the gospel to the people of Europe, the great apostolic missionary had come straight to the city which this trader in purple was carrying on her traffic. Inquiring into the spiritual condition of the town, and the practices of such as might be inclined to worship God, Paul soon learned that out through the gate, little beyond the walls, on the bank of a river, not the Strymon, for that was too far away, but the Gaggit, which was within easy walking distance, there was a place where a few souls were wont to gather that they might hold communion with the Father and with each other. When the Sabbath came, Paul visited the place of prayer, and there he met the woman from Thyatira.

The result of the meeting was that Lydia passed over from the Jewish to the Christian faith. She was one who had worshiped God on the basis of the law and ritual of Moses; but from that time on she was to worship God in Christ. She was not a convert from atheism to Christianity; for she believed in God and was sincerely endeavoring to acknowledge and glorify Him. She was not a convert from polytheism to Christianity; for she had come out from the old pagan superstition and given assent to the claims of the Hebrew faith. But in Christ, as presented by the Apostle in that informal interview at the river side on the Sabbath, she saw God in a new revelation, and in a higher manifestation of His love and grace, and in a closer fellowship with her own personality, and she moved forward with all promptness into the light and life so convincingly opened to her mind. She be-

she a disciple of the Lord and through this discipline a child of the Father more truly than ever before. From general statements, however, let us turn to particulars, and trace the steps, one by one, so far as narrative affords us guidance, by which Lydia found her way into the experience of the saving grace of Christ, and became one of His immediate and earnest and devoted followers.

The first noticeable fact is that Lydia desired help for her spiritual life, and she took pains to be present at the time and place at which she was sure she would most likely to receive this help.

She was at the place of prayer. She was not there under the expectation of being charmed and awed by magnificent architecture; though it would take a more splendid cathedral than has ever yet been built to match the beauty of the sculptured earth and the dome of the overarching sky. She was not there to be galed and thrilled with fine music; for though they might have joined in the singing of a psalm, it is doubtful if so much as a single note of song was struck. She was not there in the thought of meeting a large company, and so having her own mind quickened and her enthusiasm stirred by mingling with large numbers in acts of devotion; for Philippi was a military rather than a mercantile city, and hence there were never many Jews there. At the time of this meeting on the river-side at which Lydia was converted there seems to have been no men in regular attendance. Least of all was she there to be aroused and carried away by an eloquent sermon. The chances are that either this woman nor those who were associated

with her in worship had any knowledge of the arrival of Paul in the city. The Apostle found the place and when he had found it he sat down and talked and talked in a familiar way with these few women about Christ and the life that is to be obtained through faith in His name. Lydia was there to get all the benefit and inspiration of the wonderful words of the Apostle.

If one would receive a divine blessing one must be where a divine blessing is most likely to be bestowed. In all Philippi there was no nook or corner where spiritual light would be so likely to shine, and where spiritual joy would be so sure to be found, as in that "place of prayer" to which Lydia resorted. Nor was there in all Philippi an association of people who would be certain to encourage each other so much in a life of trust in God and in a struggle for inward purity and peace and obedience, as that little circle of women by the river-side. Lydia was in the right place, at the right time, and with the right people. Had she been absent from that little meeting, on that Sabbath, she herself would not have found Christ, her name would not have figured as it has for all these centuries in the sacred roll of honor and influence. The New Testament story would have been wanting in this beautiful narrative, and it would have been misfortune and loss all along the line.

There is a temptation, and a very powerful one, in these modern times and under the high pressure and excitement of modern life, to abandon public worship and to hold aloof from the circles where two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord, and to

all religious questions and interests severely alone. idleness from overwork, social dissipations, books, magazines and papers, domestic demands and enjoyments, the attractions of fresh air and green fields and songs and flowers, and the waters of lake or sea lying against the shore, are explanations or excuses forward to justify much of the indifference which manifested to the welfare of the soul. Spiritual idleness, easy-going habits, Saturday night indulgences and big dinners on Sunday might be added to the list.

But men and women will not find God by turning their backs on Him. They must face Him and draw near as near to Him as they can.

God has channels along which He moves in on minds and hearts. His Word is one of the distinct voices through which He speaks to us and makes His will known to the world. If it is the secular newspaper, the secular volume, and not the Bible, what chance has the truth to make its impression? The church and the services of the church have been greatly honored in the past in reaching people who were without hope and bringing them under the power of the endless life. But what likelihood is there that the church through its services will be of any special help to anybody who refuses to join in its worship? Companies of believers met for prayer hardly ever fail to find a blessing from the Lord and to be a blessing to each other; and the Spirit often works through these gatherings to bring renewal of life to other souls. But of what benefit can the opportunities and influences of gay circles be to one who steadily ignores them?

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Lydia put herself in the way of getting good, she got good. She was in line with God's way working.

The second noticeable fact in the conversion of Lydia is that she was wrought upon by divine influences and in this way was led to see her need of Christ and to accept Him as her Saviour. "Whose heart Lord opened."

Observe how the two things come together under one common direction. Paul had a vision. He heard a voice calling him into Macedonia. "And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them." It was the Lord's guidance and work. But when Paul had obeyed the vision and reached Philippi and found the little fellowship of Jewish proselytes out by the river-side and had quietly spoken his word to them, then the same Lord who had commissioned him for the service on which he had entered, moved with an impressive energy upon Lydia, and opened her heart to the truth, and thus set her in the way of immediate discipleship. It was the Lord, operating after a divine method on two lives and shaping their actions, bringing the prepared speaker and the prepared hearer together, and sanctifying the message delivered to the conversion of the recipient of the message. There is much of this co-working brought to light in the Scriptures, as also in the developments of providence. Other illustrations of it will come before us in dealing with other characters.

Lydia, as has been intimated already, had a naturally sensitive to religious influences; and appeal

le to her spiritual faculties, or to her spiritual hungings, met a quick response. She had a clear perception that this life is not all, and that loyalty to one's own soul means loyalty to things invisible and immortal.

But beyond this she came under the special illumination of the Spirit of the Lord whom Paul was preaching and her mind was quickened to understand truth, and her heart was made willing and even eager to receive the grace of God in Christ.

This was in strict accord with the teachings and promises of Jesus. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, shall bear witness of me." "Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but what things soever he shall hear; these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come." There is more to the same effect. These passages are enough, however, to show what our Lord led His followers to expect. On the Day of Pentecost the seal was set to these expectations. Not in the same extraordinary way, but in the same effective way, the Spirit that wrought so mightily on the occasion when thousands were converted, wrought on the soul of Lydia, and led her to see and feel her need of Christ, and how Christ suited Himself to all her desires and aspirations.

So instructed and influenced the woman experienced a sudden uplift of her whole being. All her faculties were touched and tuned to finer issues. Her

feelings were purified and elevated. To know and do the divine will seemed to her in those moments, doubt, the supreme privilege and joy of living. The opening of her heart by the Lord was what the spring is to earth and air when the winter is over, and brooks are running merrily to the sea, and the birds are back with their songs, and the fields and forests are re-clothing themselves with verdure, and the husbandmen are abroad with their seeds, and the atmosphere is beginning to be laden with fragrance. Breathed upon by the Spirit of the Lord, she was like a tree just ready to burst into blossom. There are times when men and women have clear, quick visions, and momentous issues are settled within the limits of a single clock-stroke. The mind of Lydia moved rapidly under the tuition of the Holy Spirit, and what Paul said of the Christ she was able to grasp and appropriate without any long delay.

There is no doubt at all that the Spirit works upon all minds and hearts. Especially may it be taken for granted that where the truth as it is in Jesus is proclaimed the Spirit is present to forerun and accompany and follow what is said. Christian truth, or truth which has its center in Christ, is just the kind of truth to secure the sympathy and co-operation of the Spirit. Not all are sensitive to these influences of the Spirit. Not all yield to the pressure of the Spirit when the pressure is brought to bear on the conscience. Not all, it may be, have an intelligent idea of the working of the Spirit, even when he works on their own heart. But he is always putting forth enlightening and guiding and helpful energy. For some particular reason

necessary for us to know, the fact of what the Lord of the Lord wrought in the heart of Lydia is known; but we should know, even had we not been told that she had reached her decision under the influence of a divine guidance and quickening.

The third noticeable fact in connection with the conversion of Lydia is that immediately on hearing the word from the lips of the Apostle she applied it to her soul and became a close and pronounced disciple of Christ. She gave "heed unto the things which were written by Paul."

Lydia did precisely what everybody who finds his way into the faith and fellowship of the Son of God is bound to do sooner or later,—she called her own will into action, and by deliberate choice set herself over on the side of Him who came to announce a divine love and will and to be a universal Redeemer.

It would have been all in vain for her to be present at this river-side prayer-meeting, and to listen never so attentively to the truth brought to her attention, had she formed no opinion and taken no steps for herself. It could have been all in vain, too, to have her heart opened by the Spirit, had she not brought her will into accord with the will of the Spirit and accepted Christ. When the Lord opens the heart, as the heart of Lydia was opened, conversion is not only possible, it is probable; yet it is by no means certain. Conversion becomes an actual fact only when the person concerned or moved or wrought upon or even intellectually convinced himself elects God to be his God, Jesus Christ to be his Saviour, and the Holy

60 NEW TESTAMENT CONVERSIONS.

Spirit to be his Comforter and Guide, and the life and hope of a disciple of the Lord to be his life and

The point is sometimes raised, though not so often now as formerly, whether we have elected of God or not. But the question is not much whether God has elected us as whether we elected God. For in spite of all advantages and hindrances, and all prayers in our behalf, and all favoring associations, and all ministrations of the Spirit, we never stand on God's side till we choose to be on God's side, and we never have Christ for our Lord and Master until we choose to have Him for our Lord and Master. If there was ever a person chosen of God and elected to the discipleship of Jesus Christ and to heirship of the heavenly kingdom, that person was Lydia; for the Spirit "opened her heart" and awakened her interest in the truth and drew out her inclinations toward Him who came into the world to save His people from their sins; but nothing God did or could do would have availed to put this woman into the ranks of believers in Our Divine Lord, without the action of her own free and self-determining will. "Come" is explicit and hearty invitation; but the acceptance of the invitation rests with us. If we come, our coming will not be through a constraint which overrides or in any way disregards our individual rights and responsibilities, but because we choose to come. This is where the guilt lies—not coming when we might come and ought to come. "Ye will not come unto me." "How often—and ye would not." Lydia chose Christ—promptly and resolutely chose Christ. She

er stand with the Apostle and his associates, and all throughout the world and throughout the ages might avow their faith in Him "who was delivered for our trespasses and was raised for our justification."

Lydia put the sincerity and earnestness of her conversion of Christ in evidence in two ways.

In the first place she received baptism. "And when I was baptized, and her household." Not necessarily in an ostentatious manner; but in a way to make the fact known to all who had a right to know, and all, no doubt, who would be made the better by seeing it, she walked through the open door of baptism into membership in the Holy Catholic Church. "A seller of purple" seems to have given not so much as a passing thought to the effect of this step she was taking on her business. She did not ask whether it would be likely to increase or decrease her popularity. She accepted Christ; and she wanted to be baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Considering all the circumstances, this was a remarkable exhibition of devotion and courage.

In the second place she was forward to extend Christian hospitality to those to whom she felt so greatly indebted for the new light and life brought to her.

This was one of the first forms of service open to her, and she entered upon it without question or hesitation. "She besought us, saying: If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." Evidently Paul and his companions made the house

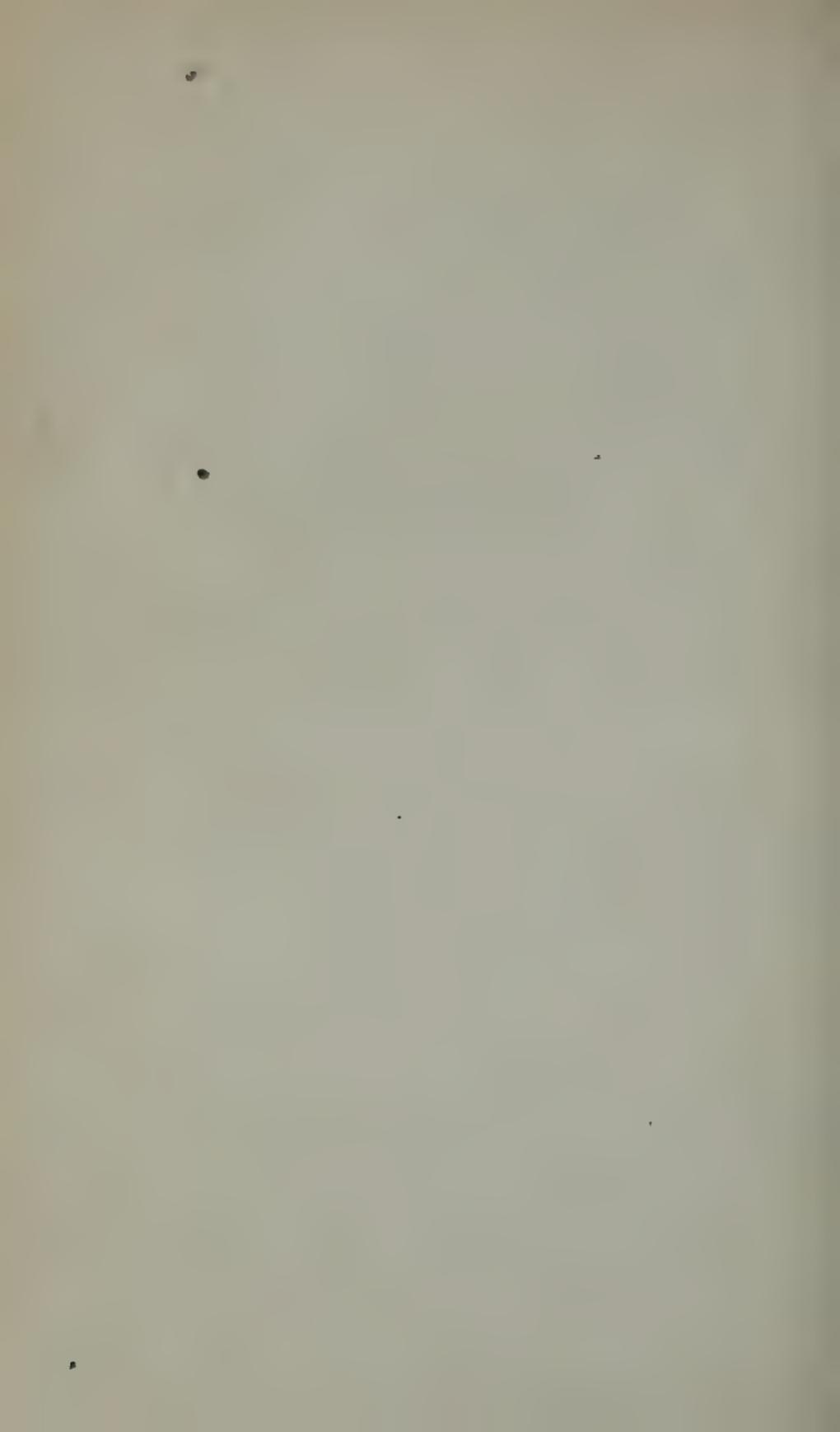
of Lydia their abiding place during this first visit to Philippi. For when the Apostle and Silas had been released from prison, they "entered," so it is said, "into the house of Lydia." "Given to hospitality" was the lesson Lydia seems to have learned without much difficulty; and the sweet grace of opening doors to Christian Workers and sharing bread and shelter with them for Christ's sake was put into immediate practice by her.

Thus in such attitudes and helpful acts as were practicable Lydia demonstrated the genuineness of her faith. Her heart had been opened to Christ by the enlightening and tender influences of the Spirit; by her own deliberate choice she had accepted Christ; and the thing now was for her to live this new life out; and just this was what she proceeded to do to the best of her ability.

It is of not much use to try to get on on any other basis. To admit Christ's claims; to confess Christ before the world; to be baptized and admitted into membership in the Church of Christ, and then to lock the lips and fold the hands and do nothing, will bring no results worth mentioning. Faith must be followed by works, and if there is growth it must come through activity.

But independent of the interest we feel in Lydia as a unique figure in New Testament history, and of the lessons to be learned from a study of God's dealings with her and of her own dealings with herself, there is a vast and imperishable significance attached to the conversion of this seller of purple there at Philippi who found Christ out in that little praying circle.

the river-side. Lydia was the first person to know Christ in Europe. Lydia was the first of the vision through which the great Apostle directed to pass over into Macedonia. The great campaign was opened by winning a woman to the . It was a prophetic beginning. It meant a era for the half of mankind which had been ected and oppressed through the ages. It meant and powerful co-efficients for Christianity. It nt sweetened homes and worthier social life. Lydia the herald of the best kind of a New Woman.



THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.

"The woman saith unto Him: Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw."—John 4:15.

IV.

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.

The meeting of Jesus with the Woman at the Well came about in a very simple and natural way. In consequence of a fresh outbreak of hate and opposition on the part of the Pharisees, our Lord found it expedient to leave Judea and go up into Galilee. He must needs pass through Samaria. In the course of His journey along this line of travel He came to Sychar, where was the Well, known and famous for centuries as Jacob's. It was near the noon hour. Jesus was weary; and He sat by the well, waiting, no doubt, for some one to help Him to a draught of its sweet and refreshing waters. While He waited, this Woman of Samaria came for her needed supply. At once the weary traveler made known His wants and asked her for a drink. It was what we should call a chance meeting, and such an occurrence as might take place at almost any public well in almost any land.

Yet simple and natural as this meeting was, the request of Jesus imported into it an element of extraordinary significance. It would not seem that asking for a drink of water could mean much; but in this instance it meant nothing less than a social and religious revolution.

The Samaritans were a mongrel people. They were the descendants of the remnants of the Ten Tribes and the heathen colonists introduced into Palestine

by the Assyrians. Their morals were of a low grade. Superstitious, deceitful, false of tongue, and licentious, these Samaritans were anything but attractive. The Jews looked down upon them with a lofty scorn, and would have no dealings with them. Hence the surprise of the woman when asked by Jesus for a drink of water, and her own question in return: "Hast thou not heard that I am a Samaritan woman?"

Jesus was a Jew; and He was also the Son of Man, and in the expression of His wish for a drink at the hands of this woman of Samaria, He rose to the height of the occasion and at one stroke smote away shattered race prejudices and national prejudices and religious prejudices and aesthetic prejudices and planted himself squarely on the great doctrine of the Common Fatherhood of God and the Common Brotherhood of Man. The request was merely: "Give me to drink;" but made by Jesus and directed to the woman, it was more than a request—it was a new hope for the conventionally ostracized and the morally wayward and fallen.

At this point the interview became personal and searching. Jesus had made known His want. The woman had given voice to her astonishment. The next moment He was her Master to instruct, and she was at His feet to learn. For in response to her avowal of wonder at what He had done, our Lord made reply: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water."

is as much as if the Great Teacher and loving
hour had said: "I have asked you for water from
well to which you have come to draw, because
n athirst from the dust and weariness of the jour-
but if you knew what God had done for you, and
ou knew Me, and if you knew your own need, you
ld see at once that what you ought to do is to turn
ut and ask Me for water from the eternal foun-
"

There was another expression of astonishment by
woman, and she broke in with a fresh question:
ord, Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well
leep; from whence then hast Thou that living water?
Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us
well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons and
cattle?" The pride of the woman was touched;
though she was a Samaritan, it was her delight,
it was the delight of the entire nationality to which
belonged, to trace her descent back through Joseph
the old Patriarch whom she named. The intimation
that there could be a greater than Jacob,—or, rather,
haps, the implied assumption by Jesus of a great-
s superior to this renowned ancestor of her people,
red not a little quiet resentment in her breast, and
e did not hesitate to let it be known how she felt.
bad woman, she yet had some self-respect and some
ard for sacred traditions.

A question so clear and direct called for an answer
ually clear and direct. Practically what the woman
d was a challenge to Christ. He had spoken of
wing water," and of being able to "give" this
ater" to her. What did He mean by it, and how or

from what source was He to obtain this "living water?" Jesus stuck close to the figure under which all the talk had been carried on and in reply to interrogation which had been submitted to Him made this deep and luminous and ever-to-be-remembered statement: "Every one that drinketh of this water—this water which was to be drawn from Jacob's well—shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but water that I shall give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life." This was His answer,—an answer worthy of the Son of God and full of divinest import.

The meaning of the words was evident; and, though she did not comprehend them fully, they brought the woman to an immediate decision. Here was a water not for the body, but for the thirsty soul; and taken in faith and sincerity it would quench the thirst of the soul forever. Drunk in the way in which Christ meant it to be drunk, this water, instead of being the water of a well to be drawn up in buckets, would become an overflowing fountain, and a fountain, too, whose flow would increase with the years. She wanted this water, and she said so promptly. "Lord, give me this water, that I thirst not; neither come all the way hither to draw." This was the crisis in the woman's spiritual life. She had been led on step by step until she was ready to accept what Jesus had to bring to her. The latter part of what she said shows confusion of mind and lack of true spiritual apprehension. But this was the turning point in her thought and career and character and in the whole outlook of her life.

tle while before Jesus had said to the woman: "Give Me to drink." Now conditions were reversed and the woman was saying to Jesus: "Give me this water." Only imperfectly, but in a way very real, the woman had come into the faith.

Singularly enough, the commentators and critics have almost all of them broken their necks in trying to vault over the difficulties with which they have wedged this passage about. One of them thinks the woman had an idea that there was a fascinating mystery behind what Jesus had been saying and she wanted the water in order to find her way into the secret of this mystery. Another of them thinks that the woman supposed Jesus to be talking about a water possessed of miraculous properties, and she desired to experience the transforming effects of it. Still another has a fancy that her request was only half serious,—half in earnest and half in banter. Not to be outdone by these wild conjectures, there are others again who claim that the woman was indulging in irony, pure and simple, when she made known her wish to Jesus.

But on the face of it could anything be more absurd than either of these suppositions? Especially could anything be more absurd than the charge of a lack of directness and sincerity in this woman? The talk began in an expression of need. From first to last it was large and serious talk. At every turn it grew deeper and deeper. Is it quite conceivable that this woman who, though her record was sadly stained, was yet not without religious susceptibilities and appreciation of truth, could stand there face to face with Him

who had shown her such extraordinary deference and courtesy, and hear Him talk, and note at once His benignity and His majesty, and lend her tongue to bantering and irony? No. The woman was sincere and at that moment her heart turned in the right direction.

As already intimated, her perceptions were still clouded and her ideas of Christ and His mission to the world were vague, and it would have been difficult for her to define her new views and account for her new feelings; but the petition: "Lord, give me the water," marked her acknowledgment of a profound sense of need and her surrender to the influence and guidance of Jesus. Whether at this stage she thought of Him as One who could deliver her from the guilt and bondage of her old bad life and fill her heart with a new and higher joy than had come to her hitherto may be doubted. In any event she was not a perfect Christian, but she was a disciple of the Master. She had come under His power. His truth, as Coleridge would say, had found her. From this time on she was to learn many things. She was also to do many things which would both attest her sincerity and honor her Lord. She was to be a new creation in Christ Jesus.

That this is the right interpretation is made evident by the treatment Jesus accorded the woman. He did not take her to task either for confusion of ideas or for flippancy of speech. On the contrary, in the very next words He uttered Jesus proceeded on the assumption of the woman's sincerity and earnestness. Instead of giving her further instruction He turned

quare about and began to test the strength of her
th and purpose. She believed; but how much did
e believe, and with how much vigor? If a woman
e this was to become His follower, she must know
st what is meant; and others must know. Nothing
her heart must be allowed to be hidden away,—
thing in her past concealed. It must all come out.
he woman had declared her wish—she wanted the
ater of life. She thought she was sincere. She
emed to be in earnest. Jesus would find out,—
ould find out not for His own sake, but for her sake.
e would put the probe in deep. He would toss her
to the seething cauldron of her own dismal history.
e would bring her square up against a line of facts
which would flush her cheeks with shame and show
what stuff her resolution was made.

So, without prelude and without warning, Jesus as-
sumed an authoritative tone and said: "Go, call thy
husband, and come hither." Her "husband!" What
chapter that was to open! What a spot that was to
touch! What an avenging memory that was to in-
voke! What an overwhelming flood of humiliating
regret that was to let loose! What a sudden illumina-
tion that was of days which had been dark and foul
with sin! It was as if a thousand search-lights had
been turned in on her at once, and every shameful
secret had leaped into the glare of high noon. No
matter how genuine her intent, nor how determined to
live a new life, it is easy to imagine how the woman
must have recoiled from this sort of allusion and ex-
posure.

But to the credit of her honesty of aim, and in proof

of a kind of high moral pluck which still remained the woman in spite of all her past waywardness and wrong-doing, and in justification of the confidence which Jesus had inspired in her, it is to be said that she passed through the ordeal successfully. It is not necessary to go into details; but in effect the woman confessed all her misdeeds. She had had five husbands, from whom, in succession, she had been divorced; and the man with whom she was then living she had never been joined to in the bonds of marriage. Her relation to him was an immoral and compromising relation. Jesus brought it all out. In doing so He amazed her by the knowledge of her career which He revealed and His insight into her character. He touched and quickened her conscience; and He set her forward in her apprehension of Him and in her faith. For her first exclamation after these astonishing revelations had been made, and the damaging and repulsive facts of her career had been dragged out into the light, was: "Lord, I perceive that Thou art a prophet."

This was a decided advance on what the woman had known or felt before. First there was an evident longing in her own soul for a purer and better life. This longing may not have been very pronounced, and it may have been experienced only fitfully, but all the unexpressed suggestions and side-playings of the interview reveal its existence. Her quickness in catching at anything which had promise in it of being helpful reveals a well-defined desire for something worthier of her womanhood than had ever yet come to her. In addition to this Jesus stirred up her reflection.

His speech aroused her intellect as by a sudden shock. Then she began to feel a strange pressure on the moral sense. It was as if God's finger had found the sensitive spot in her ethical nature. All this was followed by the awaking in her soul of faith. She had come to see that He who had been talking to her about the "living water" which He could give her and which she wanted, was a Prophet of God.

There was further intercourse and further instruction, of which more particular notice will be taken in a moment. But meantime under this instruction the woman kept growing. Her sun that was below the horizon when she first began to talk with Jesus had mounted far into the heavens. The blade of her crude notions had become an ear of intelligent apprehension, and the ear had rounded out into the full corn of a witnessing and working life. In the time that intervened between the appearance of this woman at the well and the return of the disciples who had gone away to the city to buy food, she had heard and accepted Christ and consecrated herself to His service. The time was not long, but it was long enough; and the change was radical.

The sincerity and earnestness of the woman in making her request for the "living water" of which Jesus had spoken were shown, as we have seen, in the unflinching and undaunted way in which she stood the test Jesus applied to her. Her sincerity and earnestness when she had got further on and the mists were cleared away were put in evidence, not alone by what she was willing to bear and to surrender, but by what she was ready to do. She began straightway to work.

She made activity in winning souls the witness to her faith. She demonstrated the reality of her conversion by the completeness of her consecration. She fell into line with the high purpose which brought Jesus Christ into the world. "So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city, and saith to the men: Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; can this be the Christ?" There was no doubt in her mind; but she put it in this tentative and half-timid way, probably, that she might not excite prejudice, nor frighten away those whom she was seeking.

What was the effect of this witnessing? "And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on Him because of the word of the woman, who testified: He told me all things that ever I did." But other Samaritans beside those who believed on Him in virtue of the testimony of the woman came out to hear Jesus. These people besought Him to linger there; and He yielded to their request and remained two days and taught them. His word was with power. It was a great revival occasion, and many believed. Then "they said to the woman: Now we believe, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Just this one woman had brought all this about. She had brought it about for the reason that she herself had been radically changed in character by the power of Christ, and filled with a high enthusiasm for souls. She was in dead earnest. Her acquaintances and neighbors understood it and felt it. They knew

hat kind of woman she had been. They knew what
nd of woman she had come to be. If the transfor-
ation in her had not been real and complete, she
ould have had no influence for good. That she had
uch a marked influence is an incidental testimony
gain to the genuineness of her purpose. The old had
een put off. The new had been put on. Morally
and spiritually she had been reconstructed. Her sense
of obligation was quick and deep. She felt that she
wed everything to Christ, and she was ready—more
than ready, eager—to do everything she could for
Christ.

The difficulties she had to encounter in rendering
effective service were serious. Even among the Jews,
where her position was higher than in other Eastern
nations, woman was looked upon as wholly inferior
to man. In her testifying she had to contend with
the common prejudices against her sex. Added to this
was the special disadvantage she was obliged to labor
under in attempting to bring her people to sit at the
feet of a Jew; for this would be their first thought of
Jesus. To make the embarrassment still greater, she
was a degraded woman; and in consequence of her dis-
reputable character could hardly escape the scorn of
the better element of society in all nationalities.

Yet this woman, just this one woman, this Samari-
tan woman, regenerated, converted, brought over from
the fellowship of the world to the fellowship of the
Christ, by her simple timeliness and activity in wit-
nessing set a marked religious movement on foot, and
nobody knows how many souls out of darkness
into light, and out of death into life. For all these

intervening centuries this woman at the well and the other Samaritans who were led by her into the faith have been looking into the open face of their Common Saviour and making heaven ring with their songs of joy. It will be good to meet them by and by.

What a pity it is that the old enthusiasm for bearing testimony and working for souls which used to characterize freshly converted men and women seems to have gone out of fashion. When Andrew had beheld the Lamb of God with a discerning eye he thought at once of his brother and he hunted him up and brought him to Jesus. In this way was Peter led into the faith. The woman at the well had no sooner become assured in her own mind that Jesus was the Christ than she set to work to bring just as many as possible into discipleship.

There are two or three facts brought out in this narrative which are of marked significance and which it is worth while to consider carefully.

One is that this woman at the well was reasoned into the faith she came to hold.

Christ did not call her and then by a sweet divine influence constrain her into the acceptance of His salvation. She did not search out Christ and beseech him to do something to relieve her from distress of mind and deliver her soul from guilt. There are no indications that her mind had been specially operated upon by the Spirit and opened to the truth. The talk began in a request which led to a question, and from that opening of the interview right on to the end it was question and answer. It was a quest for light and it was a giving out of light. First of all there were

ar statements of facts; and then these statements are followed by arguments suited to the demands of instructed judgment.

There are those who appear to think it is no use to go down and try to reason people into the faith. Appeals may be made to their consciences, to their feelings, to their hopes and fears; and they may be commended to God in prayer; but debates, discussions, arguments are often thought to be of little worth in bringing about conviction of sin and change of moral and spiritual attitude. In instances not a few, no doubt, this is true. But it is not to be forgotten that Christianity is a reasonable religion. Of old God said: "Come let us *reason* together." Christ reasoned with men. He addressed His words to the thinking faculties and He sought to arouse thought in men and women. He seems to have felt that He was making progress and giving truth a better chance to win when He could induce those to whom He spoke to pause and reflect.

The woman at the well will always remain a monument to the power of clear statement and right reasoning to convince and to constrain the soul to duty.

Another fact of profound meaning and to be noted with gladness is the way in which Christ could take characters low down and far away in sin and by His grace transform them into moral beauty and fit them for great honor and usefulness. Wandering stars He knew how to recall to their orbits. Under His skilful manipulation materials the most uncompromising could be changed into vessels of service and of ornament.

The better element that is in every human soul was

ever present in the thought of Jesus. He recognized this element and insisted that everybody should recognize it. He saw it in publicans. He saw it in harlots. He put it into the Prodigal whose portrait He drew. He took it for granted that there was something in this woman at the well to which appeal could be made and from which response would be received. He met her and dealt with her on the basis of possibilities she had never realized in her life and character.

In this *Spanish Student* Longfellow makes Don Carlos say:

"I believe
That woman, in her deepest degradation,
Holds something sacred, something undefiled,
Some pledge and keepsake of her higher nature,
And, like the diamond in the dark, retains
Some quenchless gleam of the celestial light."

Jesus justified this faith when He took this low-down Samaritan woman in hand and led her up into the light, and restored her to self-respect and the favor of God, and by His love and the new convictions and impulses wrought in her by the Spirit, constrained her to an efficient and blessed work for Him.

This is the beneficent power which has always been in Christianity, and which is in it still. It rescues; it renews; it transforms; it elevates. If only they will let it, it turns even the vilest sinners into saints. The Son of God was here to seek and to save that which was lost. His mission was to the race. He was not here to aid men as against women, nor women as against men; but to purify and advance them both.

had the healing touch of a Great Physician for all were sick. He had the yearning love of a Good Shepherd for all who were astray. As was said of Timaeus, poor human distinctions of high and low, rich and poor, of being a little less or a little more useful, faded out and disappeared in His presence. The judices of race and nationality and office and sex counted for nothing in the schedule of His divine philanthropy. The treatment accorded by our Lord the woman at the well was typical of what was to be His treatment of even the most abandoned of men in all lands and in all ages. The benefits received by the woman at the well were foretastes of the blessings which were to come to all women everywhere through the saving grace of Christ.

Another fact, very astonishing when all things are considered, is that this woman at the well, through questions and her mental and moral receptivity, furnished occasion for the utterance by Jesus of some of the loftiest and most revolutionary truths which ever fell from His lips.

Recall the facts once more. She was a woman, and partly because she was a woman, the customs of her people repressed her and put her at every disadvantage. She was a Samaritan woman; and this aggravated the temptation in which she would be held by all Jews. She was a woman of seriously compromised character. Most men would have thought it prudent to shun her. Even she was only one,—not a vast assemblage, not a conourse of people of intelligence and wealth and high standing and vast influence,—but only one; and of a bad reputation.

Still Jesus spoke to her some of the most important and wonderful words of His ministry; and words which, so far as we can see, the world would have missed had it not been for the incident of this interview with the woman at the well. It was to this woman that Jesus announced a religion so spiritual, so enduring, and so universal, that all mere formal religions, and all mere transitory and local religions, would ultimately go down in competition with it and be superseded by it. "Believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. * * * The hour cometh and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such does the Father seek to be His worshipers. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

As has been well said by another: "Words like these marked an epoch in the spiritual history of the world; a revolution in all previous ideas of the relation of man to his Maker. They are the proclamation of the essential quality of men before God, and show the loftiest superiority to innate human prejudice or narrowness. Christ speaks, not as a Jew; but as the Son of Man,—the representative of the whole race. * * * Rising high, not only above His own age, but even above the prejudices of all ages since, He gives mankind their character of spiritual liberty forevermore." These are large, true words.

In the light of the instruction given by Jesus to the woman at the well, it is seen that neither place nor form is essential to true worship. True worship has its seat in the soul. It is not the mouthing of

ials, and the observance of times and seasons, save a matter of expediency, but the sincere and earnest communion of the human heart and the Divine Heart, which makes worship real and helpful.

"The revelation of this," to quote once more, "in wide application now given it, was the foundation of the New Religion of Humanity. The isolation and exclusiveness of former creeds were swept away by time forever. Religion was henceforth no tribal privilege jealously kept within the narrow bounds of mere nationality. The universal presence of a spiritual God made the whole world alike His shrine. The veil of the Temple was first rent at Jacob's Well; and He who, till then, had, as men thought, dwelt only in the narrow limits of the chamber it shrouded, went forth thence, from that hour, to consecrate all the earth, as the great Holy of Holies. Samaritans, Heathens, Jews, were henceforth proclaimed children of a Common Heavenly Father."

These are the deep and majestic truths; the revolutionary and exalting truths; the truths which have already done so much for mankind and which are to do still more in the future, which the Christ made known to the woman at the well. No wonder she believed and was saved. The wonder is that all do not believe.

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR.

"And the jailor being roused out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice: Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. And he called for lights, and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said: Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said: Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately. And he brought them up into his house, and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God."—Acts 16:27-34.

V.

THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR.

In considering the conversion of the Philippian jailor we are dealing with a case in which sudden alarm—an alarm, indeed, amounting to terror—seems to have been the determining factor.

The reasons why Paul and Silas came to be arrested and thrown into prison; their experiences during the brief period in which they were in confinement; and the peculiar circumstances which led the keeper of the prison into a relation so quickly and radically changed from that of an official guard over the Apostle and his companions and fellow-workers to that of a humble and earnest suppliant for light and guidance at their feet, are, it is to be presumed, quite familiar to all; yet it will be of advantage to us in our present study to recall them in outline.

Paul was approached through a vision. In the vision he saw a man standing, and the man was beseeching him to come over into Macedonia and help. Accounting this call to be the voice of God he had obeyed and was in Philippi and at work.

The first move by the Apostle on reaching the city, so far as the record shows, was to hunt up the prayer-meeting. Some people, when they go into strange towns, seem to think they must devote their attention to what they call the “sights” and go “slumming.” Paul and his associates thought it better to ascertain

if there were any devout souls in the community, and, if there were, to consort with them. In virtue of this plan the place of prayer out by the river-side was discovered, acquaintance was formed with a little circle of God-fearing and pious women, and Lydia of Thyatira was turned to the faith.

The next incident in the Apostle's career in Philippi conspicuous enough to be written out, is his experience with the maid who had a spirit of divination and who brought her masters much gain by her soothsaying. There were persons, no doubt, who trusted this woman, and really thought that the spirit of prophecy dwelt in her. It was because of this popular faith in the maid that her owners were able to make large profits through her divination. She was a paying investment, and they did not wish to have their enjoyment of so lucrative a monopoly disturbed. But Paul knew that the spirit which was in her and which possessed her was not a pure spirit, but a foul spirit. Under some sort of constraint she bore witness that Paul and his associates were "servants of the Most High God" and heralds of "the way of salvation;" but the Apostle evidently thought the witnessing was under such an inspiration and for such an object that it brought no credit to the maid, and he was "sore troubled" by it. One day, in the name of Jesus Christ, he cast the evil spirit by which she was controlled out of her.

This act made difficulty and precipitated a crisis. No longer possessed of this spirit, she was no longer of any value to her masters. She was a tree from which they could pluck no more fruit. She was a field

om which they could gather no more harvests. She
as a property from which they could get no more
come. From first to last Christianity has exorcised
great many devils; and it has said "hands off" to a
reat many men who were using their fellow men only
or cruel and selfish purposes. There is a vast amount
of this same sort of beneficent interference still to
be exercised. The immediate effects of what Paul had
done were just what might have been anticipated. Her
owners, as owners whose gains come from cruel prac-
tices and from pandering to the vices of society always
are when their wicked schemes are interfered with,
are mad; and as the outcome of their rage, Paul and
Silas found themselves thrust into prison. Lydia had
welcomed them to her house. The owners of the
boothsaying maid had for them only the hospitality
of a jail.

This is the way the incarceration was brought about.
"But when her masters saw that the hope of their
gain was gone, they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and
dragged them into the market-place before the rulers,
and when they had brought them unto the magistrates,
they said: These men, being Jews, do exceedingly
trouble our city, and set forth customs which it is not
lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans.
And the multitude rose up together against them; and
the magistrates rent their garments off them; and com-
manded to beat them with rods. And when they had
paid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison,
charging the jailor to keep them safely; who, having
received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison,
and made their feet fast in the stocks."

Here they were, with their garments stripped from them, bruised and bleeding from the fierce strokes of the rod, forced back into the inmost recesses of the prison, and with their feet fast in the stocks! The situation appeared desperate. It looked as if Paul's vision had been only a delusion and a snare. It looked as if the voice—the sharp Macedonian cry—which had fallen on his ear and brought him to the shores of Europe, had originated, not in heaven, but in his own disturbed imagination. To human calculation and foresight the mission of the Apostle must prove a most ignominious failure.

But before morning those stout walls were to echo to the voices of supplication and song; and within their inclosure was to be held one of the most remarkable prayer-meetings on record. Before morning God was to come to the signal rescue of His discredited servants, and set the seal of the divine approval both on their aims and their characters. Before morning the amazed and frightened jailor, who had carried out his orders so faithfully and taken such pains to make his prisoners secure, was to be on his knees before Paul and Silas, with the petition that he might know the way of salvation leaping hot from his lips.

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed. And the jailor, being roused out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to

ll himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying: Do thyself no harm; for we are all here. And he called for lights, and sprang in, and, trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said: Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

These are the providences by which the jailor was led into the presence of Paul. These are the conditions, in any view very remarkable and interesting, under which he was constrained to ask his question.

Pursuing our study with a view to ascertaining what are the most central and significant truths laid bare in this instance of conversion, we find the conversion to be one in which both the question asked and the answer given are classical and go to the heart of what must be fact, in one form or another, in the case of every person who comes into the saving faith of Christ.

Consider, for a little, the question.

It is a question, it will be perceived, which went straight to the mark and covered the whole ground in a breath: "What must I do to be saved?"

The first impulse under which the jailor was moved to ask this question was fear. He was frightened by what had occurred. But this is a consideration of small consequence so long as he asked his question in sincerity and with earnestness. Of this—his sincerity and earnestness—there can be no doubt. Earthquakes are impressive teachers, and the man, there in the darkness of those midnight hours, when bolted doors were flying open and massive walls were tumbling down about his ears, made rapid strides in a kind of knowledge to which, it may be, up to that date,

he had paid little attention. All of a sudden, and in a way not to be easily dismissed from mind, he discovered that there are more things in heaven and earth than the keeper of a Roman prison may have dreamed of in his philosophy.

But if he was aroused by fear, and in his dread of consequences was self-pushed to the verge of suicide, he soon recovered his senses and knew exactly the right thing to do. His first alarm had been for the safety of his prisoners; for if these escaped while committed to his custody he knew nothing but the severest punishment awaited him. But with the walls toppled over, and the doors open, and the prisoners still safe in his keeping, and Paul and his co-worker and fellow-sufferer showing such a spirit as they did toward him, he was persuaded God was in what had happened, and that these men were not only under His special protection but were the servants of God and the bearers to the world of a truth he needed to know and of a blessing in which he wished to share. His apprehension and alarm for personal safety had passed over into an eager desire for personal salvation. However much or little of the way of life the jailor may have known before; whatever may have been his previous attitude toward the demands of religion in general, he had come to the place where he felt that his supreme need and the supreme good which could be bestowed on him was salvation—his own personal salvation.

Hence his question: "What must I do to be saved?" He was thinking of nothing else, and apparently caring for nothing else, but just to be saved.

There are implications in this question which it is worth while to notice. There is the implication that something must be done. "What must I do?" It was part of the jailor's thought that a blessing like this salvation could come to him as in a dream, or by chance, and without effort by anybody. It would not be strange if he had vague notions on this point; but it is creditable to him that he appeared to be ready to do all that was necessary. There is the further implication that he himself had a direct responsibility in the business. "What must I do?" He recognized the demands which were made on his own personality. There must be something for him to do, and he wanted to know what it might be. This was what he asked of Paul and Silas—that they would tell him what he must do. Multitudes fail right here,—they seem to think salvation must be thrust upon them without any cooperation of their own. They are to stand still and be wrought upon by a magic energy and lifted like so much passive matter into the kingdom. The jailor had more sense. He knew there was a responsibility resting on him personally, and that if he were ever to be saved he must lend his own will and endeavor to the accomplishment of this end.

But beyond these implications there was a direct push for salvation. The fact he wanted to know was how to attain salvation. At that moment nothing in the world seemed to him to be of so much consequence as securing the deliverance of his soul from sin and freeing his conscience from the pressure of guilt and establishing right relations with God. He did not ask Paul and Silas to explain to him the secret of the

earthquake, nor how God can answer prayer, nor what subtle proofs they had that what they preached was true; but he asked them to tell him about the way of salvation,—that was all.

The jailor was wise. Any man who follows his example is wise. The question of questions for each human being to ask is the question of the keeper of the prison at Philippi. There is no other question so important and so imperative. When one realizes what it is to be a child of the Father and yet not a child of the Father; when one faces the cross of Calvary with any suitable appreciation of what the cross means; when one takes the measure of his own capacities and projects his existence out into the future and tries to picture what that future must signify without any divine fellowship in it, it seems an impertinence even to think of any other question until this of the jailor has been asked and answered. It makes no difference what one's age, if only years of discretion have been reached; what one's ancestry and associations; what one's scholarship or mastery in art and science; what one's wealth; what one's occupation; what one's professional or social standing; what prospects one may have before him of worldly satisfactions and triumphs; this question of salvation is the one to be asked,—to be asked first and foremost, and with a persistency which will rest in nothing short of an answer that will go to the root of the sin which breaks the harmony between the soul and God and involves the whole moral nature in guilt. Men seek pleasure; they hunt for chances to make profitable investments; they build mills; they hurry away to their Silver Creeks and their

londikes; they try their luck in politics and in literature. But the antecedent thing is just what this Philippian jailor sought—it is salvation. “But seek ye first His kingdom.” “First.” “First” in point of time—“first” before anything else; and then “first” in point of importance—“first” over and above everything else. This is the question which goes before all other questions—our salvation.

Consider, in the second place, the answer given.

It was simple; it was direct; but it was comprehensive, and it covered the whole case: “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.” If the question asked is the one question which should supersede all other questions and be pressed with desperate vigor; so this answer is the one transcendent answer; and until this answer has been given, no other answer is at all pertinent.

This answer has the merit of being exactly in line with the answers given over and over again—if not in form always, yet in substance—by our Lord. Recall some of them: “God so loved the world, that He gave us His only begotten Son, *that whosoever believeth on Him* should not perish, but have eternal life.” It is belief on Jesus which conditions all. In another passage the statement of the Great Teacher is to the same effect: “He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life.” Still again we have the words: “He that believeth hath eternal life.” When some of the people asked Jesus what they should do in order to work the works of God, the reply which He made was: “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.” Other quotations might be brought for-

ward, but they would all be of the same purport. Jesus sought to concentrate all trust in Himself and to make everybody know He was the Way and the Truth and the Life. Sometimes He said "believe;" sometimes He said "follow;" sometimes He said "come;" sometimes He said "obey;" but whether it was "obey" or "come" or "follow" or "believe," it came to the same thing in the end. It meant that anybody who wished for salvation, and was really intent on securing salvation, should look to Him for it, and trust in His redeeming grace.

Precisely this was the instruction given by the two missionaries,—or rather by Paul, probably, as the suitable mouth-piece of them both. "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house."

He did not say to the poor smitten man: "You better delay a little. This is a very serious question which you have submitted; and it demands a very serious answer. But just now you are excited, and in no condition to attend to a matter of such grave import. Wait till you get calm, then in your sober moments think it over, and when you have taken sufficient time for careful reflection come back to me, and you shall be told what to do." No. This was not the answer given. Paul was a man of courage. He could face governors without quailing, and emperors and angry mobs, and stand unblenched in the presence of death. But he would not have dared to speak these words to an inquirer.

He did not say to him that he must read widely, and investigate the problems involved in the relation of

the soul to God, and not move forward till he had mastered the law and the prophets, and secured and digested the opinions of all those whose opinions were entitled to weight on the change he proposed making. The man had avowed confidence in his own moral and spiritual integrity, and so felt that he did not need to be saved; or if he had affirmed that his views on the subject of salvation were not quite settled and he wanted more light, then it would have been proper to give him counsel which would aid in clearing his vision and assisting him in an understanding of his most pressing needs. But there was nothing of all this. What the man wanted was to know the quick, straight way to salvation; and what Paul told him was the quick, straight and only way to salvation.

He did not say to this awakened jailor,—awakened in the double sense of being suddenly aroused out of a sleep and suddenly brought to a consciousness of his spiritual perils and needs,—go away and make it a subject of prayer. Paul surely believed in prayer. The first thing he did on reaching Philippi was to search out a little praying company and identify himself with them. That very night a most wonderful illustration of the efficacy of prayer had been furnished to them, and to the jailor, and to all the inmates of the prison. Our Lord prayed, and He enjoined prayer. Paul prayed and he enjoined prayer. Heavenly wisdom is promised to prayer. The Spirit is given in special measure in answer to prayer. Any man may still pray for divine guidance into salvation. But often, there and then, the Apostle said nothing. Tell

me how to be saved—that was the petition. Believe on the Lord Jesus—that was the answer.

He did not say to him that he must subscribe to a creed, or accept a formulary of doctrine, or follow any prescribed ritual of service. Paul believed a great many things, and he was abundantly able to give a reason for the faith that was in him. He belonged to the vertebrate and not the jelly-fish order of Christian. His theology, like the solid earth, was ribbed with granite. He had opinions and he had convictions, and he trusted to them as mariners trust to the fixed stars. His epistles are tonics to weak-kneed views of the divine laws and the divine methods. But no man ever loved Christ more than Paul loved Him. No man ever had more confidence in the saving power of Christ than Paul had. No man ever took a soul that was under conviction and in distress in consequence of sin straighter to Christ than Paul. No man ever made so little of set form and view when it was a question of salvation as Paul.

Hence Paul took this agonized and inquiring jailor right into direct personal relations with the Personal Christ. Names of men, articles of faith, philosophies of religion, plans concerning deliverance from the guilt and defilement and bondage of sin, motives proper to be followed, feelings suitable to be experienced were not so much as mentioned, but the path was opened right to Christ, and the man was led up face to face with Christ. He was not diverted from his main purpose by the introduction of any side issue. He was not confused in his mind by subtle discourses or elaborate statements. In the same direct and earnest

inner of mind in which the question had been asked, was answered, and what the man wished to know he was told. The jailor wanted to know what he should do—this is what he should do—believe on the Lord Jesus. Being saved there would be enough for him the way of work and self-denial and sacrifice; but salvation was to come by believing on Christ.

Here then we have the question of the jailor, and the answer of the Apostle. The question is the question to be asked still by every human soul that has not yet found peace in believing. The answer is the only answer which any man has a right to give to one who is in distress through a sense of sin and wishes above all else to be in harmony with God and an heir of heaven.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, He said: Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said: And who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him? Jesus said unto him: Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that speaketh with thee. And he said: Lord, I believe. And he worshiped Him."—John 9:35-38.

VI.

THE MAN BORN BLIND.

There are few more touching stories than this of the blind Man. Nor is it pathetic merely; it is full of profoundest meanings. Else we might be sure a whole chapter of a book so brief as the Gospel of John, and devoted to questions and interests of such momentous import, would not be given up to it.

In making a study of the characteristics and movements and experiences and crowning joys of this unfortunate and yet most fortunate person he appears before us in various aspects.

He appears before us first of all as an object of pity. He has been blind from his birth, and he is poor. "Is not this he that sat and begged?" In our imagination we can easily picture him sitting there by the way-side, close up to the Temple, with his sightless eyes and his outstretched hand mutely appealing to the charity of passers-by for daily sustenance.

Next we see him as the silent recipient of the healing ministries of Jesus. His eyes are covered with a reparation of clay; and in obedience to the divine direction he goes forth to wash away the obscuring films in the Pool of Siloam, and returns with new-created vision.

Immediately he emerges into view as a public curiosity. Everybody is talking about him. His neighbors and acquaintances are full of gossip. Disputes

arise over the identity of the man ; and the whole circle is thrown into a mood of half-wild inquisitiveness. There is a rush to see him.

From being the center of an over-eager, not to say impertinent, wonder, he is set forward into the position of one suspected of some criminal complicity in wrong-doing. He is forced to pass through the trying ordeal of what is meant to be an overwhelming examination. He is maliciously interrogated. His word is questioned. He is shamefully brow-beaten. He is taunted with his sinfulness. Conspicuous authorities are invoked to intimidate him.

After this we behold him as an outcast. He is driven away. As he goes he is pelted, no doubt, by furious storms of Pharisaic anathema.

Finally, as the last scene in the rapid succession of events, we find this man whom the Pharisees hated, but the Lord loved, once more in the company of his Friend and Helper—Jesus Christ. The loving Saviour has sought him out when others have forsaken him ; and he has come to know by the peculiar experiences through which he has passed that his Friend and Helper is none other than the divine Redeemer. Persuaded of this, he is ready to make confession and to worship Him in devout adoration.

In every phase of it, it is a wonderful story. Few narratives are more dramatic or more instructive. The poor Blind Man has not only found the boon of sight, but of insight. Through this new spiritual vision he has been enabled to come up out of the darkness—so much deeper than any from which one is shut off who cannot see sun or moon or flower or human face—

which sin begets, and takes his place in a sublime illumination in which one walks when the whole soul is lighted with beams from on high, and the path is flame with shining from the Sun of Righteousness.

If, now, we turn from this brief rehearsal of facts lying on the surface of the story to a little closer study of it with the purpose of tracing the various stages of thought and feeling through which the Blind Man passed in going up from the condition in which our Lord found him to the condition in which He left him, we come upon a number of traits of character and incidents in experience which are of marked significance.

First of all, observe the patience of the Blind Man. His was a destiny to make one patient. Almost always great calamities have this effect. The most patient people, no doubt, which any of us has ever seen have been those who were forced to sit day after day under the shadow of some personal affliction.

Especially is this true of the blind from birth. They carry their spirit of resignation in all their movements,—in the tones of their voice, in their methods of address, in the lines of the face, in their unwearied devotion to what their hands find to do, and the cheerfulness with which they seem to acquiesce in their lot. It is rare for them to make the impression of discontent and rebellion.

A number of years ago the privilege was afforded me of being present at one of the musical entertainments given at the Institute for the Blind in Philadelphia. Rarely might one ever see a group more ac-

quiescent, apparently, in their lot, and more determined to make the best of it. But in spending an hour with them and watching their movements, it was not easy to escape the suggestion of something like this,—a great once-for-all conflict in which the hands had been clenched and there was a fierce wrestle with decree,—and then—peace forevermore. Their joy seemed to be the efflorescence of a plant whose roots have run down deep into the sub-soil of the divine wisdom and love. Back somewhere in the past there has been a sweet Voice, whispering in heavenly accents to the soul and saying: “It is best”—and there has been a response: “Thy will be done;” and henceforth it was peace. To come into such a mood, and abide in it, is the crowning triumph of patience.

To my thought the patience of this poor Blind Man was a patience after this order. He made no appeal; but sat by in silence. No doubt, like others of his class, he had heard of Jesus and His wonderful works. Close by the Temple, he was in the way of those who would be crowding about the Son of Man. Rumors of one who is held to display extraordinary healing power—even though the pretense be only so much downright quackery—have a mysterious way of reaching and influencing those who are ill or permanently disabled; and these rumors, it is more than likely, had fallen on this man’s ear. Moreover, Jesus and His disciples entered into conversation right there before him, and he heard the blessed words: “We must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. When I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” These were

the words which the vibrating air brought to his sensitive ear.

Think what words they were to fall on the ear of a blind man! Light! The light of the world! True, he could know only by conjecture what it all meant. He had never seen the sun making its circuit in the heavens. No flash of the wealth of the world's beauty had ever penetrated his sealed eye. No green fields, no broad and radiant landscapes, no outline of swelling bud, no form of lily, no flooding tide of morning glory, nor sunset loveliness; no changing tint of forest, no soft tracery of valley, and no majestic uplift of mountain; no sweep of billowy cloud, and no glint of star, and no splendor of the sky, had ever pressed in upon him through the gates of vision and warmed his whole being into an unspeakable gladness. But he had his notion of it all,—his notion of light, and what it must bring to one with an eye to see. It can hardly be otherwise than that there were moments, even though no whisper of his longing may have escaped him, when he would have given much for just one glimpse of the things about him.

Right there, near enough, it may be, to be touched, was a man who seemed to be talking in a way to intimate that He had within Himself all resources of light. But not a word escaped the Blind Man's lips. He was quiet, submissive, patient.

Blind Bartimaeus, when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, pursued Him with such zeal and made such an uproar of entreaty, that the disciples felt constrained to check him.

This man, blind from his birth, sat silent. He ut-

tered no word of request. He made no demonstration. It was not because he was constitutionally incredulous; for while he was cautious and advanced with care, he was yet, as we shall see before we are through, a man capable of simple, strong faith. It was not because of any morbid despair into which he had settled down. There is an unprotesting endurance of misfortune sometimes wearing the air of patience which is, after all, nothing but the paralysis of the moral faculties. Or, if it is not the paralysis of the moral faculties, it is the stubbornness of excessive pride. The characteristics of this Blind Man, as brought out in the story, forbid any such conclusion regarding him. He seems, on the contrary, to have said to himself something like this: "I will wait; there shall be no hasty and impudent obtrusion of my needs, even upon Him who calls Himself the light of the world." He did wait.

Had this Blind Man known what Jesus could do for him—for his body and for his soul alike—and what He would do for him, his quiet waiting would have seemed out of place. But it is not certain that any expectation of cure had been awakened in his mind, or that he so much as thought it possible. Hence he sat passive under his disability. Silent and submissive through long habit, he was nevertheless near to a blessing which was rich far beyond all his fondest dreams. His eyes were to be opened and his soul to be saved. Who knows but that for his blindness of eye his soul would have remained in darkness forever!

Consider further the open-minded and sincere receptivity with which this Blind Man accepted the truth as it was made known to him.

Two influences operated to bring him into the faith: One was gratitude; the other was the conviction wrought in his mind by the facts presented in his own experience. It was not in his nature to have such a favor extended to him as he had received in the opening of his eyes and not be profoundly grateful; nor did it seem to him at all reasonable that anybody should be able to work such a miracle as had been performed on him without being supernatural and divine.

"And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying: Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" With the disciples he was an object of speculation. Their question, too, carried with it the implication of positive guilt somewhere. In no other way could they account for a calamity so serious. But this notion our Lord corrected at once. Having set the disciples right on this point, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him: Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam. He went away, therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

This is the story of his blindness and of his seeing. Blind from his birth; but by so simple a process, and so quickly, made to see! Hitherto he had been in a world of darkness; now he was in a world of sunrises and sunsets and green fields and flowers. Before he had known voices; from that moment on he was to know faces and forms and landscapes.

But with what readiness he took it all in. How submissive he was to Jesus. There was no debate over

the possibility of a cure by such means. There was no question about the advisability of doing as he was directed to do. He was told to go, and he went,—did exactly what Jesus asked him to do. This was a great thing; and a great blessing came of it. How many in these days would find light if they would only do as Jesus tells them. If any man will do the will, he shall know of the doctrine.

An incidental indication of the ingenuousness and honesty of the man is seen in the fidelity with which he kept to the facts when called upon to narrate what had happened to him. He came square up to the line of what he knew, and he stood there, halting no inch short, and going no inch beyond. His identity was questioned. Some said he was not the man they thought he was; but another—one just like him. He came forward and settled the question; “I am he.” Yes, I am the very man who used to sit there and beg. Then they all join in a request for the particulars; “How were thine eyes opened?” “He answered and said: A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me: Go to the Pool of Siloam and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight.” There it is item by item, just as the facts occurred. Nothing is added; nothing subtracted; nothing strained out of proportion, and nothing is modified or tricked out for effect. His whole affirmation about Jesus is: “A man that is called Jesus.” As yet this is all he knows about Jesus; and this is all he will say. These are the facts, and he gives them. He does not know whence He came, nor where He is gone.

After further reflection, and when pressed by the Pharisees, he is persuaded that Jesus is a Prophet; and this he says, and sticks to it.

But this openness to each fresh revelation of the truth, and readiness to move along on the line of the highest disclosure revealed to him had its supreme illustration in the act which made the Blind Man—no longer blind—a pronounced disciple of Jesus Christ.

In consequence of the statement which he made, and of his sturdy adherence to what he was sure were the facts, this man was cast out. He was cut off from the fellowship of the Pharisees and the Church which they represented. But this casting out had a sequel and a very delightful one.

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, He said: Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" This made the matter personal, and brought the issue, not of light for his eyes, but of light for his soul, straight home to the man, and it was now to be settled once for all whether he would be a believer. "He answered and said: And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him: Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee." Here was the disclosure. Our Lord had made himself known in His exalted character. He could open blind eyes; but He could do more than this,—He could enlighten and save darkened souls. Would this man accept Him? The woman at the well accepted Him so soon as she became persuaded of His Messiahship. Would he who was born blind be equally hearty and prompt in yielding to the Saviour's claims? With what joy do we read the next words in the story:

"And he said, Lord, I believe." Gratitude and the convictions of reason led him, step by step, till he came to the sovereign triumph of faith in the loyal acknowledgment of the Christ as his personal Redeemer. From a blind beggar, he had advanced to an open-eyed and glad heir to the everlasting inheritance.

There appeared to be no halt in his forward movement. At first there was no sign. He just obeyed. Then his statement was: "A man that is called Jesus." From this he advanced to speak of his Healer as a Prophet. Last of all he acknowledged his belief in Jesus as the Son of God, and worshiped Him. Just as fast as the truth came to him he took it.

It is refreshing to meet such a character. He would assent to nothing beyond what he could assent to in all sincerity of heart. He would not refrain from assenting when he saw his way clear in conviction or duty. He did not withhold assent through any hard self-consuming skepticism. Nor did he pretend ignorance in regard to the nature and character of Jesus to get rid of responsibility. He was simply a straightforward and ingenuous man. Light was precious to him, and he welcomed it. It was precious to the eye and it was precious to the soul. If only they were as frank as this Blind Man was, how many would be saying: "Lord, I believe."

At the risk of some repetition in the story, let us think for a little of the moral courage of the Blind Man. He was patient; he was receptive; but he was also remarkably brave.

Bear in mind that he was poor. He was nothing but a blind beggar, accustomed to sit and ask for alms. He

was without influential friends. Through the double restraint imposed on him by his blindness and his poverty, he could have had but slight education. When permitted to open his eyes on the world—after the manner just recited—it is only natural to suppose that any commanding exhibition of dignity would awe and dazzle him. All his previous thought of himself, and whatever training he might have had, would tend to make the impression on his own mind of his personal inferiority and insignificance. One would not expect to see such a person resolute in the maintenance of his opinions and confident and self-assured in the presence of those whom he had always heard of as occupying the highest political and social positions in the nation.

For this was the character of the men into whose jurisdiction he was brought. He was at the bottom; they were at the top. They were men of imposing names and high functions. The majority of them were known to be bitter enemies of Jesus. They had entered into an agreement, though the agreement may not have been formally enacted and publicly announced, but an agreement all the same, to cast any one out of the synagogue who should confess the Messiahship of Jesus.

There were three degrees of excommunication. The first continued thirty days. During this period the person excommunicated was debarred from certain privileges, though he might be present at public assemblies.

The second came into effect, if at the end of the thirty days the disciplined person remained obstinate,

and consisted in placing the offender under the curse of exclusion from assemblies and from intercourse with others.

The third form or degree of excommunication consisted in a perpetual shutting out from all the privileges of the Jewish people, both civil and religious.

These were the penalties impending over any one who should confess belief in the Christ. It is easy to see it would take moral courage of a high order to meet an exigency like this.

But from first to last the Blind Man neither flinched nor quailed under the sharp test. He walked right along in the path which opened to him, and he accepted and stood by the truth just as fast and as far as it was revealed to him. He followed his convictions. Nothing daunted him. He would neither back out nor be drawn out of his position. He was a Daniel.

Summoned before the tribunal of curious and gossiping acquaintances, he stated the case just as it was. One detects no tremor in his voice.

Brought before the Pharisees and questioned and cross-questioned in a tone which revealed the malignity behind the question, neither dignity nor frowns nor threats had any intimidating effect on him. He said his yea; he bore his testimony; he did his witnessing, as heroically as Socrates could have done it.

How different his stand and his sturdy, manly speech from the cringing non-committal attitude of his parents! What a shame when fathers and mothers are not faithful to children who have moral energy enough to be faithful to Christ!

Not satisfied with the answer of the Blind Man the

charisees called the parents. This was the question put to them: "Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How doth he now see?" With all the joy they must have felt at the restoration of their unfortunate boy, one would suppose they would have run forward to express their gratitude and to render acknowledgments to Him who had done this wonderful work of healing. On the contrary they were exceedingly careful to keep within safe limits. They simply said: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now seeth we know not; nor who hath opened his eyes we know not; he is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself." Fine specimens of agnostics, these parents! They didn't know! But their ignorance, or pretended ignorance, was put forward to shelter their cowardice. They were afraid. The threat of excommunication filled their souls with terror, and they did not dare openly affirm what they must have known.

Called back again and placed once more on the rack the Blind Man grew bolder and bolder. He advanced upon the Pharisees in a way they did not relish: "I told you even now, and ye did not hear; wherefore could ye hear it again? Would ye also become His disciples?" This was at once his uncompromising attitude and his bold challenge. Of course they reviled him. But with what a manly dignity, with what a convincing logic, and with what a strain of eloquence, did this man meet their taunts: "Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence He is; and yet He opened my eyes. We know that God heareth not sinners; but any man be a worshiper of God, and do His will,

him He heareth. Since the world began it was never heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God He could do nothing."

His moral courage was of a rare type. He not only held his ground, but forced the fighting. He had in him the stuff of which martyrs are made.

Turning now for a moment from the Blind Man to his divine Healer and loving Saviour, how sweet and attractive seems Jesus through it all. It is the beneficence of heaven let down to earth.

With tumultuous outcry and threats of violence our Lord had just been driven out of the Temple. He had used the bold and startling expression: "Before Abraham was I am." They took up stones to cast at Him, but He escaped. "And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth." Enemies were close behind Him full of bitterest hate. He did not know how soon He might be set upon. But here before Him was a poor suffering specimen of humanity. To bring relief to such persons was a part of His mission to the world. His disciples, as we have seen, were disposed to turn the man and his condition into a theme of speculation. They asked their question about him. Jesus answered the question. He did it briefly, however; and then without explanation or delay devoted His energy to the practical business of healing the man's sightless eyes. With what a quiet tenderness it was all done.

What significance there is, too, in the principle He laid down for His own guidance in this and in all other concerns; and for the guidance of everybody as well.

We must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." It is the same as if He had said: "Here before me is poor unfortunate who cannot see. He has never seen. It is mine to open blind eyes. This is one of the duties which has been imposed upon me by the Father. This man's eyes shall be opened." So the Blind Man received his sight. Without solicitation Jesus moved forward to exercise His healing power. What an impulse it would give to us all for work could we only feel as Jesus felt when He said: "The night cometh."

How exquisite the delicacy, also, with which Jesus treated the Blind Man—no longer blind—when the Pharisees had cast him out. So soon as He heard what had befallen the man He hunted for him, and hunted till He found him. The simple outcast in the midst of his new-born joy over sight given, and in the midst of his persecution, had never once thought, in all likelihood, that his divine Helper was looking for him. But he was.

Jesus is looking for many a man in sorrow and trouble and sin that He may help him. He is looking for many a man that He has helped a little that He may help him more.

He was looking for this man, and He found him. When He had found him, in a few brief words He made Himself known, not only as the Great Physician, but as the Divine Redeemer. What a striking commentary on the striking text: "We love, because He first loved us." He first!

Is it not in place to commend a Saviour who is so loving and tender, to all who have not yet accepted

Him and come under the power of His illuminating and redeeming grace? He longs to open all blind eyes, and to shed the beams of a divine light on all darkened souls. Nothing would please Him so much, and so gladden the hosts of heaven as to have one and another and another say as the Blind Man said: "Lord, I believe."

Is it not in place also, now and ever, to commend to all who believe, or who are conscious of having received any kind of help or blessing from Jesus, an imitation of the moral courage which was exhibited by this man who was brought out from the physical and spiritual darkness in which our Lord found him and who stood firm and immovable on the facts of his own experience? We want more men who cannot be intimidated nor beguiled from the faith; but who in the face of all opposition are true to their convictions.

ZACCHAEUS.

"And He entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, a man called by name Zacchaeus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. And he ran on before, and climbed into a sycomore tree to see Him; for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and said unto him: Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord: Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him: To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:1-10.

VII. ZACCHAEUS.

Zacchaeus is here called “a chief publican.” He is designated in this way for the reason that he was an administrator of taxes and had the oversight of a number of common collectors of revenue. It is not surprising to be told that he was rich. Bartimaeus, who received such signal service from the Lord, was a beggar. The man who was blind from his birth, and who was led out into light—physical and spiritual—by Him who was at once his Healer and Saviour, was a beggar. But Zacchaeus, the publican, was rich. He had a wealth-producing section to farm. Jericho was renowned for the dates and balsam and balsam-honey which it yielded.

It is clear, moreover, that not all of his money came honestly. He might not have been one of the most unscrupulous men of his class. A study of the narrative in the light of what it says and also in the light of the habit of the sacred writers to make known the facts in cases of extraordinary wrong-doing renders it quite evident that he was not exceptionally cruel and unjust. But his office was one with which much pressure and extortion were associated, and he was not altogether superior to the temptations of the position. He acted, no doubt, in the spirit of the advice said to have been given by one of the most scholarly and dis-

tinguished Prime Ministers which France has had in the last hundred years to his friends: "Gentlemen, enrich yourselves." Or on the policy of Leo X, when, with an eye to self-indulgence and pleasure, he said: "Let us enjoy the Papacy, since God has given it to us." Only, Zacchaeus was thinking not so much of self-indulgence and pleasure as of gain.

But whether his possessions were accumulated by honest or dishonest methods, or by methods partly honest and partly dishonest, Zacchaeus was a man of means. He would be hated by the Jews; for he was a living representative and exponent of the worldswaying Power which had subdued their nation and inflamed their pride; but he would be esteemed by his set, and held in honor by all worshipers of silver and gold.

His riches, however, did not satisfy him. "He sought to see Jesus."

On the surface of the story it looks as if the motive which awoke this desire in the mind of the "Chief Publican" to see Jesus was mere ~~curiosity~~. Unquestionably this was his motive in part,—possibly in the larger part. Zacchaeus was a brisk, active man. He had a quick and fertile mind. The duties of his office would require him to keep stirring about more or less. He would easily know what was going on. Like Matthew and the Son of Timaeus, and others whose stories are brought before us in the Gospels, he must have heard of Jesus, both as respects His wonderful words and His wonderful works. It is but a natural inference that he would wish to look on Him

with his own eyes, if he could. The opportunity came and he embraced it,—with what alacrity the record makes known to us.

Still it will hardly do to rest in the belief that Zacchaeus was actuated by curiosity alone in his eagerness to see Jesus. The same language is used with reference to Herod: "And he sought to see Him." But the desire of Herod was an altogether unworthy one. It was due to a mind of uncertainty as to who He might be, and to a restless smiting conscience in consequence of what he had done to John; and possibly to the thought that he might have to make away with Him as he had with the Baptist. There was nothing of this in the heart of our Tax-Gatherer. In so far as he was constrained by a motive deeper and more sacred than curiosity, he was more like those Greeks of whom John speaks. Their request to Philip was: "We would see Jesus." These were God-fearing men, who, having entered into some measure of saving truth, wanted to enter into a still larger measure of it. Stier, in a fine remark upon them, says: "These men from the West at the end of the life of Jesus, set forth the same as the Magi from the East at its beginning; but they came to the *cross* of the King, as those to His *cradle*." He was ill at ease. There was a secret longing in his soul—not clearly defined, it may be, but in his soul nevertheless—for peace and a consciousness of the divine approval. He had succeeded in securing earthly treasures; but these were not enough. He wanted God.

It was this more hidden desire in the man's heart which Our Lord discerned. Jesus fathomed the pur-

poses and feelings of Zacchaeus as He fathomed those of Nathanael. "Whence knowest thou me?" "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Nathanael was an Israelite in whom was no guile; and yet Jesus knew him to be a man who had inward struggles, and who, through earnest longing and wrestling and prayer, was ready for advance disclosures to be made to him. There was something half fantastic and wholly ridiculous in the way in which the Publican made his interest in seeing Jesus manifest; but the Discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart had an eye for what was below the surface; and so He made no account of the laughable posture in which he had placed himself, and noted only the worthier purpose.

With this much of preliminary matter before us, observe, now, some of the points of special interest in the story of Zacchaeus, and some of the steps taken by him in passing up from being a Chief Publican, and nothing more, to being a true and loyal disciple of Christ.

First, he was rich; but his riches did not satisfy him. He felt that in his nature there were both higher elements and higher ends than wealth, even though possessed in vast abundance, could ever meet.

This thought has been before us already; but it is something which calls for distinct mention. Men struggle for large bank accounts, as if this were an achievement in which the human soul can find rest. They tax their brains; they weary their bodies to the point of exhaustion; they subject their nerves to unendurable strains; they build factories; they open

mines ; they search the seas ; they penetrate the frozen regions of the north, or they plunge into wild jungles of the tropics ; they venture upon the hazardous experiments of speculation ; they invent plausible schemes and hoodwink the public, and grind the faces of the poor,—all to get money. For money in their estimation stands for power ; for business and social recognition ; for elegant homes and home comforts ; for books and pictures and travel ; or possibly for the coarser enjoyments which are level to coarse tastes and habits ; and without money life seems to be hardly worth living. All the same there are needs of man to which material possessions are not suited. If one is not utterly dead in his moral and spiritual sensibilities, there will be longings for purity ; there will be impatience with present attainments ; there will be cravings for heavenly fellowship ; there will be outreachings after God, which can no more be met by earthly things than the requirements of the lungs can be met with what is adapted only to the stomach. Zacchaeus realized this ; and his strange conduct grew out of a propelling impulse which had its origin in his desire for inward peace and a satisfying righteousness. He was rich ; but his riches were not enough. He was rich ; but he was sinful and he needed the Christ. He was rich ; but he was made in the image of God, and only God could meet his deepest wants.

It is to be noticed in passing that in the Gospel according to Luke there is the grouping of a large number of lessons and incidents in which Christ is pressed on the attention of the rich. In invitations, and by parables and warnings and examples, Jesus urged the

claims of the kingdom upon persons of wealth. The Rich Fool; the Feast of the Pharisee; the Younger Son who took the portion of goods which was to fall to him and went off and wasted all in riotous living; the Rich Man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, while Lazarus, the poor beggar, was utterly neglected; the Young Man of wealth who sought eternal life, but was not willing to give up everything else to obtain it; the well-to-do men whose contributions to the treasury of the Lord are contrasted with the gifts of the poor widow; and Joseph of Arimathea who provided a tomb for the burial of Our Lord, are instances in which the rich figure either as examples of blind folly and wickedness; or as mastered by their worldliness; or as coming forward and rendering service in token of their love and appreciation of Jesus. The poor had the Gospel preached to them when Jesus was on earth. But so did the rich. So must it ever be. Poor and rich alike need the Gospel,—one as much as the other. For neither of these two classes is there salvation outside the Gospel.

It is to be further noticed that Zacchaeus was quick to seize his chance and do whatever it was necessary to do to enable him to realize his desire of seeing Jesus.

Jesus was near at hand. It was the man's golden opportunity. How long he had waited to see Jesus, or how long he had wished to see Him, can only be conjectured. But delay,—even of a few moments, perhaps,—now that Jesus was close by, would put the gratification of his purpose out of the question. It was now or never; and Zacchaeus placed the emphasis on the "now" which the Scriptures never fail to place on

t. He seemed to say to himself: "Now is the time, and now it shall be."

But there was a serious difficulty in the way. Like Plato and Paul, he was small of stature. If he remained in the crowd, he could see nothing. Those who were head and shoulders above him would shut out his view; or if he succeeded in securing a good position the surging mass would be sure to push him from it. What should he do?

Blind Bartimaeus had to encounter obstacles. To begin with he was blind. Then when he cried out to Jesus to have mercy on him, the disciples thought he was too boisterous and did their best to hush him down. When called to come to Jesus he found his rapid approach hindered by the garment he wore. But he overcame every obstacle and he triumphed over every hindrance. He gained his end, for he was dead in earnest.

Zacchaeus was equally in earnest and equally successful. His difficulties were not the same as those of Bartimaeus; but they were sufficient to have defeated his aim had he not met them and mastered them in the spirit of a resolute détermination. With a quick eye he saw just what he must do; and laying his pride aside and making no account of his official dignity, and rising superior to the sneering comments and derisive smiles of the multitudes, he ran on before the crowd and climbed up into a sycomore tree, and sat there secure on his perch, and above the heads of the people who otherwise would have prevented his seeing Jesus. He took pains; he made sacrifices; he invented methods

for coming into a personal knowledge of this Wonderful Personage, and he was rewarded. He saw Jesus, saw Him as he had wished to see Him.

But what is still more to the purpose—Jesus saw him. “He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him.” That was his part, and he saw Him. “And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him.” That was the part of Jesus—to look up and see Zacchaeus; and He did, as He always does, His part. Zacchaeus was there to see Jesus; and Jesus was there to see Zacchaeus. It was eye to eye. It was thought to thought.

This holds in it a very valuable lesson which might as well be gathered up in passing. It is not by running away from Jesus, but by running towards Him, that we shall be most likely to see Him as He is, and draw his sympathetic and helpful gaze upon ourselves. Jesus saw the Chief Publican, because the Chief Publican had put himself, physically, mentally, and spiritually, where he could be seen. Our Lord has a quick glance into the secrets of souls. By a divine intuition He knows those who want Him. If one has been at cost for His sake; has crucified pride; has borne contempt; has put his standing with the world in peril; has encountered persistent opposition and overcome it; has walked in strictness, Jesus knows it all, and He will meet it with His blessing. As Jesus saw Zacchaeus, so He sees every soul that has any pulse of longing in it for Him.

Then again there was haste in the high business which was transacted between our Lord and Zacchaeus.

First of all Zacchaeus ran—"ran before"—that he might secure a place for unobstructed observation in the sycomore tree. Then, when Jesus approached and looked up and saw him, His first words were: "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." Following this, the very next statement is: "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." The atmosphere of the narrative is all astir. There is the impression of rapid movement in the whole account. The direction of Jesus is pitched to the note of hurry. The responsive action of Zacchaeus is in the same key. Something to be done, and it is to be done at once. This is what our Lord wishes,—haste; and it is in this wish for haste that Zacchaeus promptly acquiesced. "Make haste," "and he made haste."

This was the turning point in the spiritual experience of Zacchaeus. He went up into that tree a curious and interested and heart-hungry on-looker; he came down a glad disciple of Jesus. The "make haste" of Our Lord was an invitation to the Chief Publican to believe in Him, to accept Him, to follow Him, and to trust in Him and in Him alone for salvation. The "make haste" of the Chief Publican, and his joyful reception of Our Lord, indicate clearly that he had found what he craved, and was henceforth to walk the ways of the world in newness of life. His heart was touched, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he came into the secret of the Lord. His thoughts, his feelings, and his eager, and it may be, long-cherished desires, suddenly culminated in an act of faith. The sight of Jesus and the words which He spoke to him, were like the

miraculous dawning of a new day in his soul. He was a new creation.

The point of special interest and instruction in this brief interview between Our Lord and Zacchaeus, in which the salvation of the soul was in issue, is the fact that Jesus lent His sanction to this haste. The haste was at His suggestion and under His own urgency.

This is exactly contrary to the ideas of large numbers of men and women. They insist that religion is an affair of such transcendent concern that it ought to be carefully turned over in the mind, and deliberately considered in all its aspects and relations, before being either accepted or rejected. Hence there is waiting and waiting and waiting; and those who wait attempt to justify their waiting on this ground. They say they want to read and study and ponder, and possibly pray, over the question; and they must have more time. Such reasoning looks plausible; for it looks like complimenting religion and magnifying one's own sobriety of mind at the same time.

But Jesus said "now;" and forevermore He says "now." This is the great word of the Scriptures—*now*. Every premature death, every sudden death, every heart that has been hardened and lost by delay, puts the weight of a tremendous emphasis on this word "now." Our Lord, as it might be known he would be, was in accord with all heavenly voices, whether of loving admonition or of loving invitation, which reach the soul. Looking up into the face of the Chief Publican, He asked no questions, He made no effort to find out what his motives and feelings were, He gave him no counsel; He simply said: "Make haste." The in-

terests of his soul were at stake ; his peace of mind and purity of heart were in the balances ; his future welfare for both this world and the world to come were involved in his present attitude and action ; and the thing for him to do was to accept and follow Christ—at once.

After all, is not this the more rational policy to pursue? Does not this procedure commend itself to the sober second thought of sober second-thoughtful people? For what is it to become a disciple of Our Lord, or a child of God, whichever we may choose to phrase it? It is simply to turn from the low to the high, from the false to the true, from the wrong to the right. Now can anybody be in too much haste to do this? If a man is out of fellowship with the Father, can he be in too much of a hurry in getting into fellowship with the Father? If a man is under the power of the world, can he show too much alacrity in escaping from the power of the world? If a man is a liar or a thief or a drunkard or a libertine, can he stop this bad business too suddenly? If a man desires to become loyal to truth and virtue and goodness, is it not better to begin to-day than to wait till tomorrow?

Judged by any rational standard of action, Jesus was right. Whatever a man's past may have been ; whatever a man's present mood or condition or occupation may be, it is his first duty and his supreme duty to do what in him lies to set his soul right with God. "Make haste,"—this is what Jesus is saying at this moment to those who are far advanced in life, and who have only a little time, even at the most, to make their choice of God. "Make haste,"—this is what Jesus is saying to the young, while their feet are yet on the threshold of

life, and the floods of temptation have not yet overwhelmed them, that they may be kept from the disappointments and pangs of a career of worldliness and dissipation. "Make haste,"—this is what Jesus is saying to all classes and conditions of men; and were men only as wise as Zacchaeus, there would not be one who would not fall in with Our Lord's injunction.

It is worth while to spend a little time in considering the evidence which Zacchaeus furnished of his sincerity in accepting Christ.

In his direction to Zacchaeus to make haste and come down from his secure retreat in the tree, Jesus had told him that He—Jesus—must go and tarry for a period—perhaps for the night—at his house. He needed rest and refreshment, and He was to find them at the home of the Chief Publican. This was a service to Jesus; but what an inexpressibly precious privilege it was to Zacchaeus to have Christ in his home.

But this act on the part of Jesus provoked criticism. There was always somebody to find fault with Him, do what He would; and this step was made the occasion of bitter opposition. "And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner." These fault finders and grumblers were, of course, the Jews. For it was they who in their narrowness and obstinacy hated both Jesus and the whole tribe of the Publicans. To see Jesus calling a Publican as conspicuous as Zacchaeus into His following; and to see a Publican as obnoxious as Zacchaeus befriending Jesus and extending to Him the hospitality of his home, maddened these critics, and called out from them their sharpest censure.

With a frankness which showed the inborn nobility of his nature, with a generosity which made clear the genuineness of his conversion, and with a courage which must have convinced even his bitterest enemies that he had come to fear nothing except being in the wrong, Zacchaeus stepped forth and said: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold." Doubtless taunts of the injustice and extortion with which his past life had been compromised had been flung into the air; and this was his brave and manly answer,—from that moment on half his goods to the poor, and for every exaction wrongfully made four-fold restoration. What a justification was this of what Jesus had done in calling Zacchaeus into the circle of His disciples! What a tribute was this to the power of faith in Christ to reverse the currents of the moral life, and refine and elevate character! In him we see illustrated a right combination of faith and repentance, and the proper reciprocal play of the two. He took Christ into his heart, because he had in him a sense of unworthiness and need; and when he took Christ into his heart he made it evident by a radical change in his habits and business methods. Think of the gain it would be to the community were every hardened and grinding extortioner to be converted, and then follow the example of our Chief Publican and put his hands down deep into his pockets and make restitution!

That we are not wrong in inferring that the declaration made by Zacchaeus set the seal to the genuineness of his change of heart and life is made certain by the

endorsement of him by Our Lord. For so soon as he had made his statement of what he was willing to do, Jesus joined in and "said unto him, to-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." His conversion had brought him into line with the Father of the Faithful, and he was now one of the chosen of the Lord. His face was set toward the New Jerusalem. His name was in the Book of Life. He was an heir of the everlasting glory. His feet were in the path that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. His divine Friend might go on before him, but in the fullness of time he would see him again—face to face.

It would hardly be doing justice to this story not to notice, for a moment at least, the closing words of the narrative.

In rebuke of His critics and in justification of what He had done in calling Zacchaeus, Jesus gave voice to this fundamental truth and sublime purpose of the Gospel: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." This is the motive which actuated God in heaven when He gave His Only Begotten to the world,—the seeking and the saving of the lost. Is a man lost, he is the one whom Christ is after. Is a man low down, he is the one Christ is after. Is a man far away—far away in drink, far away in gross animalism, far away in degradation, he is the man Christ is after. The worse a man is—the more corrupt and dishonest and debased—the more apparent does it become that he needs Christ, and that Christ is ready to meet his needs.

THE ETHIOPIAN TREASURER.

"But an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza; the same is desert. And he arose and went; and behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was over all her treasure, who had come to Jerusalem for to worship; and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the Prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the Prophet, and said: Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said: How can I, except some one shall guide me? And he besought Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the place of the Scripture which he was reading was this: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth; in His humiliation his judgment was taken away; His generation who shall declare? For his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the Prophet this? of himself, or of some other? And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing." Acts 8:26-39.

VIII.

THE ETHIOPIAN TREASURER.

The account of the conversion of the Ethiopian Treasurer is one of the most picturesque as well as instructive to be found in the Scriptures. Philip is a charming personality. The Ethiopian wins a warm place in our hearts by the simplicity and earnestness of his nature. The divine interposition and guidance, made so manifest in so many ways and all through, constitute a strongly impressive feature in the case. Then to crown all there is such a combination of circumstances and influences—all converging on the one result of leading an inquirer out of his perplexity into the faith of Christ, that one can never read the narrative without a fresh sense of the presence of God in the whole transaction, and of the pains taken and the effort expended by Him to restore even a single soul to life.

Philip was made an Evangelist by persecution. But he had special fitness for the work which under providence he was to do. He had a clear mind. He was sincerely devoted to the service of the Master. He kept close to the task in hand. He seems, moreover, to have been peculiarly susceptible to supernatural suggestions, and remarkably prompt in obeying the voices which spoke to him from on high.

This divine leading under which Philip came at the outset is the first thing to impress us in the conversion of the Ethiopian. "But an angel of the Lord spake

unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza; the same is desert."

Very naturally much study has been given to the question of who this Angel was and in what way he made known his will to the Evangelist. Rationalistic interpreters have indulged in all sorts of conjectures. But it is generally better in instances like this to keep pretty close to the literal statements. It was not merely an internal impulse, nor an impressive suggestion of outward happenings, which moved Philip and determined his course; but the will of God made known to him by some sort of divine communication. God whispered to his soul, and he fell into line with what was said to him.

It may be that the "Angel of the Lord" and the "Spirit" who, a little later, speaks in the same direct way, and in the same accent, are practically identical. "And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot." In both instances there is the same end in view; the same mode of address; and the same tone of authority. In any event, divine direction is given, and divine guidance is afforded. The angel says "Go," and the Spirit says "Go,"—go forth on this sacred mission.

But if the way was divinely opened to him, and he was shown clearly what God wanted him to do, Philip was quick to turn into the path mapped out for him, and enter upon the service indicated. When the Angel of the Lord said: "Go toward the south," this is the simple record which follows: "And he arose and went." When the Spirit directed him to go near and

join himself to the chariot in which the Treasurer was riding, and who had been discovered by Philip in his going toward the south, he was even more prompt in his obedience: "And Philip ran to him."

In neither case was there any debate. There was no lingering. There was no arguing with himself about the source and validity and form in which the direction had reached him. He conformed at once to the command laid upon him and started off on his journey,—walking fast, no doubt, all the way, and ending his walk in a run. So far as the duty he was to discharge was concerned, he was all in the dark. He went forth without even the "sealed orders" with which naval officers often put to sea. He was simply to "go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza; the same is desert." That was all. It was not a very attractive outlook—down into a desert. The evangelist did not know whom he was to meet, if indeed he was to meet anybody; nor how many; nor anything about it. When he had come upon this single individual—this man of great authority under Candace and lord of her treasury—and was told to go and join himself to his chariot, he knew nothing about the disposition of the man and his state of mind. But there was no hesitation; there was alacrity in doing just what he was told to do. He went toward the south, he joined the chariot, both without question, because God commanded it.

One cannot help noting the sharp distinction which seems to exist between this Primitive Evangelist and some of our modern Evangelists. Times change. New times, in religion as well as in politics and trade, de-

mand new men and new measures and new methods. It is better, no doubt, to reach large numbers than to reach only a few,—provided only one carries them the truth and not the shreds and patches of gaudy conceit. But with all due respect to the ability and character and splendid devotion of not a few of our Christian workers and revivalists—some of whom are above praise—the question is here submitted whether the insistence on the co-operation of the ministers and churches in any given community and the elaborate planning and bill-posting, and the arousing of the hurrah-spirit in general is not just a bit overdone? It has sometimes seemed so to me.

Philip asked no questions about the “condition of the field,” and the general attitude of the people toward the Gospel, and whether there would be crowds to listen to him, and what most likely would be the fruit of his labor. He heard the voice of God calling him, and he obeyed the direction given, and in due time he found out what God had in his thought, and how He was to use him.

After all, this is the true way to win desirable results. It is through one’s own spiritual preparation and the complete surrender of body and soul alike to the divine guidance. For ministers, for evangelists, for Sunday-school teachers, for workers for Christ in any sphere the secret of highest success lies in the inward preparation through which the human will is surrendered without reserve to the divine will. The Day of Pentecost came, not in virtue of the beating of drums and the scattering of posters, and much fine manipulation of public sentiment by committees, but because

postles and other believers gathered in an upper chamber and with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer. They left the gathering of a crowd, if there was to be a crowd, or the assembling of the few, if there were to be only a few, to hear when they were ready to speak, to Him with whom they were holding communion, and under whose tuition they were acquiring fitness for any service to which they might be called.

Had Jesus held back and declared it to be inconsistent with His dignity to utter some of His sublimest truths to a single individual, and she an unworthy person, we should have had no story of the Woman at the Well. Had Philip held back and insisted on knowing just whom he was to meet down in the desert, and especially had he insisted that if he went down there he must have more than one to whom to preach, we should have had no story of the conversion of the Ethiopian treasurer. So, had the Apostles and disciples spent their days and nights in making external arrangements to attract a crowd, the Day of Pentecost would never have occurred, or it would have been brought about under other conditions and through other agencies.

Shifting our point of view from Philip to the Ethiopian, we find ourselves still in the same atmosphere of the Spirit. If the Evangelist has been led by divine influences until he is in the chariot, talking with his questioner, and instructing him in the way of life, it is none the less true that the Treasurer has been under the illumination and constraint of influences emanating from the same source and looking forward to the same end. While Philip has been prepared and commis-

sioned to go to the Ethiopian, the Ethiopian has been put in a state of openness of mind and eagerness of heart to receive him and any word he might bring. The Spirit has wrought in a different way on the two persons; but the working has been toward the accomplishment of a single object. The aim of God has been to get this man out of darkness and misgiving into the faith of Christ; and all means and agencies which would contribute to this result have been employed.

There are three theories touching the nationality of this Ethiopian Treasurer.

One is that he was a Jew born in Ethiopia. Ethiopia embraced the highlands of the south of Egypt, or the sections which in modern times have come to be known as Nubia, Abyssinia, and Kordofan. The island of Meroe, formed by two arms of the Nile, was the central point of the religion and commerce of this kingdom. Such a country could hardly fail to be attractive to the Israelitish people. As a matter of fact, large numbers of them many centuries before the birth of Our Lord found their way into this locality. Our official might have been one of these transplanted Jews. The supposition finds not a little support in the fact that he was reading Isaiah, though the quotation would go to show that he was reading the Prophet not in the original Hebrew, but in a Greek translation, but he was evidently reading with profound interest.

Another opinion is that the man was of a mixed ancestry, and descended from progenitors who were Jews on the one side and of the native race or races on the other. In spite of all precepts and protests against it there was more or less of this mingling of

hosen and alien blood going on all the time. If this be the right conjecture, the Jewish strain in the Ethiopian's makeup would be likely to be the dominant one, and it is easy to understand his attitude and action:—why he had been up to Jerusalem and why he was reading the Scriptures so intently.

The third, and what seems to me the more probable contention is, that this Ethiopian Treasurer was a true child of the soil and belonged to the native occupants of the land. He was a real Ethiopian,—what another has called a "swarthy African," dark of skin, warm blooded, but not a Negro proper. He belonged to a different stock from the Negro proper, and shared in a high degree of civilization. As an officer in the court of Candace, especially an officer in charge of the taxes and revenues, he might easily have come in contact with the Jews and learned about their sacred books. Still further than this, he might have espoused the faith these people held and joined the ranks of the proselytes. Eusebius was of the opinion that he acknowledged the Old Covenant from conviction, and entertained for it a very sincere respect, but that he never adopted it in form. But taking all the circumstances into account, it seems more natural to infer that he was identified with the religion of the Jews just as far as he could be. Their writings had come nearer than anything he had ever found before to satisfying the mystery which brooded over his mind, and to bringing peace to the troubled heart which he carried with him everywhere. Jew, or partly Jew and partly Pagan, or all Pagan, God was thinking about him and planning for his salvation.

This leads up to the point of chief interest in the Ethiopian Treasurer. It is not his tribe nor his kin-

dred nor his language which compels attention and holds us absorbed in his case, but the way in which God wrought upon his heart to secure his conversion. What was done outside of him has already come before us in the study of Philip. But correspondent to this outward movement in his behalf, there was an inward movement going on which was fitting him exactly for the ministry he was to receive at the hands of the Evangelist.

First of all, then, the Ethiopian Treasurer was reading a Sacred Writing. This was both a good sign and a great help. A man may read the Scriptures without having any direct personal interest in the subject of religion—read them for their literature, for their history, or for their philosophy of life; but if a man has a direct and personal interest in religion, there is no book like the Bible.

Under a conviction of sin, or under the feeling that one's life is not right and ought to be in every way better, men often do just the contrary. Instead of opening their Bibles, they shut them. Instead of reading what God says, they go to work and hunt up books whose aim is to persuade them that there isn't any God, or that if there is, He never said anything to anybody. They pore over Paine or Ingersoll, or other atheists and agnostics, and in this way confuse their minds and smother the new-kindled aspirations in their hearts and block the way to spiritual progress. They fill their eyes with dust and then declare that they cannot see. They go into mills where the rattle of the machinery is deafening, and then affirm that they cannot hear. They mock their religious sensibilities by feeding them with

an innutritious or sickening diet, and then say that they have no appetite for the truth. Under pretense of seeking light they bring in more darkness and so go further astray. The Ethiopian Treasurer was reading the Word of God. He wanted help, and he was seeking it where it was to be found.

In the second place, he was reading one of the most vital portions of the word of God. He was not reading the Story of the Garden, important and attractive as that story is. He was not reading the account of the flood; nor was he reading of battles and bondages and conquests and captivities and the tragic fate of kings and peoples. He was not reading that he might have a better knowledge of history; nor that he might store his mind with fine literary pictures. It was neither science nor war nor politics nor socialistic problems which was interesting him. He was not refreshing his memory with a reperusal of the narrative of Jonah and the whale, nor of the sun's standing still, nor of the crossing of the Red Sea, nor of the parting of the waves of the Jordan. Nothing was there of this. He was reading a passage which struck right through to the heart the whole business which was interesting his soul. "Now the place of the Scripture which he was reading was this:

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter,
And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,
So He openeth not his mouth;
In His humiliation His judgment was taken away;
His generation who shall declare?
For His life is taken from the earth."

There are many passages in the Old Testament which this Ethiopian might have been reading with interest

and profit; but what other one would have been so suitable to his case, and so easy of application as just this passage which he was poring over?

The man needed something, and he wanted something,—though of this want he may not have been conscious,—which would bring him face to face with Christ, and lead him over into the peace and joy of His salvation.

He had been up to Jerusalem for the purpose, as we are told, of worshiping. This would go to confirm what was said a little back, that though he was of an alien race he had accepted the Israelitish faith and come into conformity to the ways of the Chosen People. He had made his pilgrimage in order to offer sacrifices and pay his vows to God in the most revered of all sanctuaries dedicated to His service. While in the Holy City he might have heard of the new sect of Christians and of Him in whom they believed and around whom they gathered. Hence the selection of this particular passage for reading was in every way significant and full of hope.

A third thing which characterized the Ethiopian, and which was greatly to his credit, was his eagerness to secure and receive instruction. The Spirit had said to Philip: "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Philip obeyed, and ran close up to him. The man was reading—was reading the words which have just been quoted. Without waiting to go through any preliminaries, or to make any explanations, Philip broke in on him with the question: "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The prompt answer was: "How can I, except some one shall guide me?" Thereupon "he besought

Philip to come up and sit with him." The man was hungry for the truth. He wanted instruction. He had a conviction that this stranger who had come upon him so suddenly could teach him, and he besought him to come up beside him and make these statements clear to his understanding. It was a commendable attitude. Few things are more wholesome—both to mind and heart—than the teachable spirit. It is the man who is too conceited that he thinks he knows it all, or who is too proud to confess his ignorance, who is the hopeless man. This man was childlike in his docility.

When Philip had mounted the chariot and taken his place beside the Ethiopian, this was the question submitted to him: "Of whom speaketh the Prophet this? of himself, or of some other?" This was the crowning moment and supreme opportunity. This was the end for which the Angel of the Lord had spoken and the Spirit had given directions and Philip had journeyed desert-ward and the Treasurer had taken his long pilgrimage and had had his thought providentially turned to the Book of Isaiah,—that this question might be asked and answered. "And Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture, preached unto him Jesus." He does not appear to have had the fear of the Higher Critics before his eyes; but in this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah he found the Suffering Servant; and in what was no doubt a very tender and moving, but also a very direct discourse he unfolded to him the Christ.

From that hour the Ethiopian Treasurer was a converted man. He became a believer,—a follower,—a disciple of Our Lord. The want which he had felt,

but could not define, had been met, and the burden of unrest and sin had been rolled from his soul.

Two facts put this in evidence.

The first is his baptism. He wished to give this proof of the sincerity of his decision and the earnestness of his purpose; and also to have this seal set to his faith. Philip was assured of the genuineness of the work which had been wrought in his heart; and hence, when the Ethiopian made his request, the Evangelist fell in with it and administered the baptism which was requested. This was the right and the safe course. Men and women who think they have found Christ, but who shrink from the seal and the blessing of the sacraments often lose more than they realize.

The second fact is that the man went on his way rejoicing. He had come to know himself in a more thorough manner than ever before. He had come to know God in a higher and finer revelation than in any previous experience; for he had come to know God in Christ. Coming into this knowledge of God in Christ, and accepting Christ by faith, all the clouds disappeared from his sky, and all his great and perplexing questions were settled. There was nothing for him but just to be glad.

This is enough to make any man rejoice. Men rejoice in their earthly pleasures; in their earthly gains; in their earthly triumphs. When a man wins a law-suit, or gets elected to office, or makes a handsome sum by speculation, all his friends hurry to him with congratulations, and he is expected to be radiant with joy. But the supreme ground for rejoicing is the consciousness of deliverance from sin and of heirship to the heavenly inheritance.

TIMOTHY.

"And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra; and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewess which believed, but his father was a Greek. The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those parts; for they all knew that his father was a Greek."

Acts 16:1-3.

IX.

TIMOTHY.

This is the passage in which we first make acquaintance with Timothy. He comes into view in connection with the second of the great missionary tours of the great missionary Apostle. As will be perceived, he was already a disciple when thus brought into notice.

But in this fact lies one of the marked peculiarities and values of the case which Timothy presents. What led him into discipleship? How and when and where and why was he converted? In almost all the instances of turning to the Lord which have been before us for consideration, the motives brought to bear, the constraining influences set in motion, and the processes of the change have been largely open to inspection. Here we come upon one who is introduced to the world, not as an opposer of Jesus, not as an indifferent spectator of what is going on in religious spheres, not as an inquirer after truth and the way of life, but as a Christian, with opinions less or more clear, and with convictions less or more pronounced. It is evident he had reached his position by a method and in a manner quite different from the others. How was it? What is his story?

Timothy was born either at Lystra or Derbe, it is not quite certain which. His mother was a daughter

of Israel, but his father was a Greek. These mixed marriages were condemned by the approved policy of the Jewish nation; still they were not uncommon in the later periods of Jewish history. But the offspring of such a union was put at serious disadvantage; for they had many prejudices to encounter and overcome before they could secure recognition. Though on the paternal side it is not likely, even if, as has been conjectured, his father was a proselyte of the gate; and altogether impossible, of course, if, as has been still further conjectured, the father died while his son was a mere child, that the boy, either in his childhood or youth, received much positive training in religion; yet on the maternal side there was much tender and at the same time faithful dealing with him in the things of the soul. He was instructed in the Sacred Writings. Trust in the Father was inculcated. Reverence for holiness, belief in prayer, and pure and obedient living were encouraged. Faith and holy fear pervaded the atmosphere of the home in which he was brought up. Few passages in all literature are more beautiful or more suggestive than the words of tribute paid by Paul to the mother and grandmother of Timothy for their sweet fidelity in instructing him in righteousness.

Here is one selection: "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Here is another selection: "Having been reminded of the unfeigned faith

that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and, I am persuaded, in thee also."

This is the picture of a home in which God was magnified and honored; and the Scriptures were given the first place in reading matter; and the interests of the inner life were exalted above the interests of the outer life. It is the picture of a home in which it was thought to be of more consequence to train the children in the knowledge and habit of godliness, than to teach them how to get rich, or how to shine in social circles, or how to harvest pleasure, or how to mount to places of power.

The fact that Paul calls Timothy his child, as he does in his letter to him: "My true child in faith;" and also in his letter to the Corinthians: "My beloved and faithful child in the Lord," furnishes good ground for inferring that the Apostle met him and led him into the acceptance of Christ on his first visit to Lystra, seven years earlier than this one in which his name is brought into the record. There can be little doubt that both the mother and the boy received the glad tidings with "unfeigned faith" at that time.

But whether this be so or not, two things are certain.

The first is that the heart of the young Timothy was a soil well prepared to receive the good seed. The faithful instruction already mentioned had set his mind wide open to the truth, and put him in both an intellectual and spiritual condition to welcome any light which might be brought to him and to turn his feet at once into any path of duty which might be made clear.

The second is that in some way, through some influence, he had become a sincere disciple of the Lord when the Apostle met him on his second missionary tour. He was a believer; and he had made such progress in knowledge and was so established in the faith of Christ, and was so devoted to the ends for which the divine Redeemer had died on the cross, that he was both ready to go and Paul was ready to have him go as an efficient helper in aggressive missionary work.

From this time on, with a few gaps concerning his whereabouts at certain periods, and his duties and position in certain places, and the closing scenes of his earthly career, to be filled in by conjectures of varying degrees of plausibility, the life and services of Timothy become more easily traceable.

In general it may be said of him that he was the companion of Paul and a co-worker with him in the sacred business of publishing the gospel and establishing and building up churches. He was an evangelist; he was a messenger; he was a peace-maker; he had much to do with the collection and distribution of alms; in outbreaks of heresy and licentiousness it was his to minister wise counsels; he was acting bishop, and according to an old tradition he was a regularly appointed bishop of the church at Ephesus; and tradition also has it that he was a martyr to the faith. But on the basis of what we are permitted to know of him in the New Testament, the general statement would be that he was the intimate and trusted associate and also the discreet and faithful helper of the Apostle in his efforts to advance the Kingdom of Christ.

He had both the antecedents and the characteristics

which would fit him in an eminent degree to step into his relation to the great Apostle.

He had, as we have seen, been thoroughly trained in the vital truths of the Scriptures, and in all likelihood most thoroughly in those Scriptures which seemed to be most vital and prophetic of the coming of the Christ. Besides this, he may have been under the oversight of the "Elders," which were appointed by Paul in each of the churches which had been gathered as the result of the ministrations of himself and his associates in this region. He had something besides mere zeal to commend him,—he had knowledge and the discipline which comes of study and thought.

He had a lovable disposition. Sufficiently lacking in physical vigor to excite sympathy in his behalf, naturally timid and averse to assuming responsibilities, charmingly docile, of a sensitive temperament, so conscientious that he was disposed to press his convictions over into a perilous asceticism, of the kind of make-up which leads one to shrink from meeting opposition and bearing hardships, but which in the faith inspired and the strength furnished by the Master goes straight on as the voice calls or the vision beckons, it could hardly have been otherwise than that he should be exceedingly attractive to a man of the dauntless energy and push of the Apostle Paul. Nobody could well help loving and trusting such a man.

When to this there was added the warm testimony of the brethren—so competent to judge—at Lystra and Iconium to the high standard of his attainments and character, there was left but small room for hesitancy in calling him into the service.

How complete the Apostle's confidence in Timothy, and how his heart went out to him, and into what closeness of fellowship he drew him, are made clear by many statements and inferences; but especially by the way in which he linked his name with his own in certain of the Epistles which were addressed to the churches, and by the two immortal letters written directly to him when the end was near and life was a retrospect. "Paul . . . and Timothy the brother." "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus." "Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, and Timothy." These are specimens of the loving way in which in so many instances the Apostle associated the name of his beloved companion and helper with his own in his communications to believers. But it is only by turning to the two letters which bear the name of Timothy that we see how full he was of tender affection for his younger fellow-worker, and how he felt at one with him in all his needs and interests.

At this point it will better serve the end had in view in this study of typical conversions to drop what belongs to mere personal narrative and retrace our steps to the home in which Timothy was born and reared and carefully consider whether children brought up in domestic environments of this kind may not be expected to come easily and, one may venture to say, naturally into the Kingdom of Our Lord. So used are we to thinking otherwise that it seems quite startling even to suggest such a possibility! But this instance of the young helper of the Apostle coming early into a loving knowledge of the truth, and passing with such a facile grace and freedom into the life of a follower of

esus is too significant by far to be set aside with a reath. There is both a lesson in it which the church f our day needs to learn and an encouragement which he church of our day needs to cherish.

Dr. Bushnell, in what is perhaps the most valuable ontribution he ever made to religious literature, has discussed this subject, tenderly and thoroughly, in a volume which he named *Christian Nurture*. His main contention is, "that the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise." This proposition embodies what he calls the true idea of Christian education, and the true objective point of all such instruction. "The aim, effort, and expectation," so he says, "should be, not, as is commonly assumed, that the child is to grow up in sin, to be converted after he comes to mature age; but that he is to open on the world as one that is spiritually renewed, not remem- bering the time when he went through a technical ex- perience, but seeming rather to have loved what is good from his earliest years." It is on this line that the whole argument is conducted.

But while Dr. Bushnell takes this position and defends it with an energy and enthusiasm peculiar to himself, he is careful to make two admissions which are of marked importance.

The first is, that "the natural depravity of man is plainly asserted in the Scriptures, and, if it were not, the familiar laws of physiology would require us to believe what amounts to the same thing." Hence he says that "view the matter as we will, there is no so unreasonable assumption, none so wide of all just philosophy, as that which proposes to form a child to

virtue by simply educating or drawing out what is in him." The second admission he makes is what must be regarded in any scheme of redeeming grace the necessary corollary of the first one,—this, namely, that the child cannot be saved in virtue of anything which is in itself, but only through the interposition of an outside and divine influence. "In the strong language I have used," to quote once more his exact words, "concerning the organic connection of character between the parent and the child, it is not designed to assert a power in the parent to renew the child, or that the child can be renewed by any agency of the Spirit less immediate than that which renews the parent himself."

Here is the specific avowal of an evil tendency in the child and of the indispensableness of the Divine Spirit to his regeneration. With so much conceded, it would seem clear that there ought to be no hesitation in following this champion of the children in the claim he puts forth in behalf of the earliest possible recognition of their place in the Christian Fellowship. There can be no doubt at all that in most of the churches in which due stress is laid on evangelical truth very serious mistakes have been made in the treatment of children. Much more faith in the efficacy of Christian nurture ought to be brought into play. The establishment and enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ in the world depends far more on the right training of the little ones than it has yet occurred to us to think. Dr. Holland once said: "We can raise more Christians by juvenile Christian culture than by adult conversion, a thousand to one." Dr. Todd has declared: "Before

we are aware, the foundations of character are laid; and no subsequent instruction can remove or alter them." In illustration he cites the instance of Linnaeus, who was the son of a poor Swedish minister. His father had a little flower garden, into which he introduced his boy in his very infancy. The rest of the story tells itself. Those early influences and opportunities made the boy the first botanist of his age; and one cannot stand in the presence of that magnificent monument which his countrymen have erected to his memory in Stockholm without feeling how much it means to have a child set in the right way at the earliest moment. Heredity is not everything, as environment is not everything, but the heredity which works in the line of sin, and propagates alienation and disobedience and hatred of God, may be expected to work in the interest of righteousness and predispose souls, when traditions and blood tendencies are favorable and the atmosphere is congenial, to an easy and early acceptance of Christ. In spite of the general reluctance to accept this doctrine, and the fears which have been entertained of the consequences which would follow were our households and churches to act on this faith, there are so many instances on record of children who have found their way to Christ by a sort of unconscious gravitation, that the fact cannot be successfully disputed.

Baxter, whom Bushnell cites, is an illustrious example. He tells us that "at one time he was greatly troubled concerning himself because he could not recollect the date when the gracious change came in his character." But he grew to see that one might be

quietly educated into the faith as well as preached into the faith. Some of the sweetest and rarest Christians whom it has ever been my lot to know came into the church in this way. It is said that not one in ten of the Moravian Communion can fix on the precise point of time when he became a Christian. Speaking on this point of regenerative grace in the heart of a child, Calvin has affirmed that "the work of God is not without existence because it is not observed and understood." What a gap there would be in Old Testament biography, and what a beautiful object lesson in maternal solicitude and childhood piety would be wanting, were there no story of the boy Samuel! In his *Narrative of Surprising Conversions* Edwards is at pains to relate with great particularity the religious experiences of Phebe Bartlet. When but a month past four years of age she began an intelligent and earnest search for God. Not thought of at first by the parents in their efforts to bring the older children to the Saviour because she was so young, yet taking advantage of the instructions and counsels given to the others, she pondered and prayed and struggled until, solitary and alone, she found the Lord and the assurance of the forgiveness of her sins. This was all of her own free will and purpose. But behind this effort and victory of her own were the earlier influences to which she had been subject. When shall we learn that loving Christ is not a question of years, and that when Christ said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," he meant it! There are depths of significance not yet sounded by the most of us in that old statement: "And Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child."

He was slow in reaching the conclusion, but he came at length to understand that children can be reached by the voice of the Lord, and that the Lord does actually speak to children. In His dealing with the little ones Jesus was in exact line with what the old prophet had long before discovered. "*The Lord had called the child.*"

But this nurture in which Samuels and Timothys and Phebe Bartlets are trained into preparation for an early and almost unconscious acceptance of Christ implies a number of things of pressing importance.

It implies that the home is to be a genuinely Christian home.

There are many homes which are nominally Christian, but only nominally. Religion is not the ruling factor in them. Faith in Christ has only a shadowy, not a substantial place in their economy. In the prayers which are offered, if there are any prayers, there is only a formal and not a hearty and vital recognition of God. The reading of the Bible is hasty and fitful. thanksgiving is ever rendered and a blessing invoked at the table, as is eminently fit, it is made a mere perfunctory service. The names of the parents and possibly of some of the sons and daughters, are on the church rolls, and they go to swell the lists of church adherents in religious statistics; but the key to the real inner life of the household must be sought outside of Christ.

It is evident, as anybody can see, that the home must be other than this, if it is to be the school of a Christian nurture. It must be a home in which the

father is a true priest and the mother is a true priestess, and life on the Godward side is sincere and earnest.

We may well believe there are many homes which to outward appearance, are not deeply, and especially are not warmly, religious, which are yet controlled with the honest purpose and pervaded with the choice aroma of a faithful piety. There is no parade of family profession; no ostentatious displays of devotion; no surface enthusiasm, it may be; but hidden away in the heart of the home there is an altar of sacrifice, and on this altar daily offerings are laid, and such offerings as are well pleasing to God.

Still, whether manifest to the outward eye or not, the home must be genuinely Christian, if it is to be made to yield the precious fruits of Christian Nurture.

It is implied further that in this genuine Christian home there is a definite plan looking to the instruction of the children whom the loving Father has sent into it in religious knowledge and also in practical righteousness.

It is a very poor shift of a home in which solicitude is not felt and forecast is not exercised with reference to the future of the younger inmates of the home. There are few parents so indifferent, or so selfish, or so degraded, that they care nothing about what becomes of their offspring in the after years. If they are intelligent and reputable, fathers and mothers like to see their children enriched with the best education open to them, and well trained in the habits and manners of self-respecting people, and fitted, so far as possible, for useful and remunerative occupations.

Heads of households are felt to be wanting in duty who do not desire as much as this for their children.

The trouble is that in too many homes,—too many even of our average Christian homes—only so much as this ever enters the thought. There are schemes and policies, well defined and persistently pushed, for life on the material side, but not for life on the spiritual side. There is a plan for everything else,—for guarding or promoting health, for schooling, for reading, for amusements and recreation, for acquiring the needed grace to enter and move at ease in polite society, for climbing a little higher on the ladder of social distinction, and for the business which in due time one may be expected to take up; but there is absolutely no plan for positive and systematic training in the truths and duties of the Christian religion. This is left to outside parties,—to the Sunday-school, or it is turned over to chance, or it is prosecuted in only the most desultory and haphazard way.

In how many homes within our own personal knowledge, for instance, is there anything like a thorough and consistent course of instruction given on the Bible,—what it is and what it teaches; or on the leading names and facts of the Bible; or on the great ethical principles of the Bible as they bear on life and duty; or on the marvelous stories of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world?

In this home in which Timothy was taken in hand and taught so early and thoroughly that it might be said of him that he knew the sacred writings from a babe, we may be sure there was a plan of religious instruction, and behind the plan a purpose to pursue

this instruction faithfully. Had it not been so, there would have been no such happy result to glow in the record. The same may be said of the homes out of which Samuel, Josiah, John the Baptist, and other such characters came. Teaching religion must be a vital part of the home economy.

It is implied still again that the atmosphere of the home is to be a Christian atmosphere.

We live in a stirring period of human history. The vast conquests which have been made over nature in these modern times, and the immense wealth which has been acquired from sources only recently developed, and the ready way in which morning by morning a knowledge of all the significant events of all the world is spread out before the eyes of people, and the eager rush into which men are forced by the sharp competition of manufacturing and trade, have a strong tendency to materialize thought and conversation, not only in the shop and mill, and on the street, but within the more private and sacred precincts of the family circle. So it comes to pass that a deal of the talk, in a large number of homes, at table and hearthstone, is of things which belong to the world which is seen, and not to the invisible world.

But when intercourse in the home is all of dollars,—how to win them, how to use them in a way to make them bring more dollars, or the things for which dollars stand,—corner lots, houses, stocks, bonds,—what impressions can parents expect to produce on their children except that dollars are the chief thing, and therefore, they must get dollars?

Or, if the intercourse in the home is permitted

habitually to run into the channel of small gossip, or of what is going on in society, is it not inevitable that the younger members of the household will come to think that what their neighbors are doing, or how they dress, and behave, are the matters of surpassing consequence?

Especially if, in spite of all confessions of faith, there is bitterness in the home, and husbands and wives are in disagreement, or the children are harshly treated, or if there is manifest dishonesty and hypocrisy in the lives the parents are living, will the sons and daughters be likely to set much value on Christianity?

Just the opposite of this all-pervading worldliness and empty frivolity, and bitter temper, is what is demanded to make the atmosphere of the home Christian. The breath of Christ must be in the air of the home. The thought of Christ must give tone to the conversation which is carried on in the home. Aims and outlooks, hopes and joys, must somehow start from and return to Christ. There may be free and full discussion of current news; conferences over business affairs; animated expressions of opinion on questions of war and politics, social problems and society life; but still the dominating idea of the home must be Christ and His love and His wish and His work, if the atmosphere of it is to be Christian. It must be sweet with His sweetness, and warm with His warmth, and aglow with the light of His face. "I like this home," said one friend to another; "the atmosphere of it seems so Christian."

If, now, these implications are met; and the home is a genuinely Christian home, and there is a well-defined

plan, with an earnest intent behind it to teach the children of the home the truths of Christianity and to bring them up in the love of these truths, and the pervading atmosphere of the home is charged with the thought of Christ, and His presence is felt in all the interchange of ideas which goes on, and in all the movements of its life, then it is only reasonable to anticipate that what took place in the home of Eunice will take place in this home,—in this and all similar homes; and Timothys increasing in numbers from generation to generation, will appear; and the church will be filled with Christians who have come into her membership, not through the sharp experiences of those who have gone down deep into sin, but through the processes of growth under a tender and wise Christian culture. It is both in accordance with the facts and philosophy of faith and in line with the evident purpose of God, that children in Christian homes should be so trained in the nurture and admonition of the Lord that when the time comes for confessing Christ before the world, there shall be no central truths to be learned, and no gross sins to be thrown off, but only a simple, easy, forward step along the path on which they have already been moving, into the open fellowship of all who love the Son of God and are trying to do His will in the world.

It is because Timothy came into discipleship in this way that his example is so full of meaning. There are homes in these modern times which are doing the same work, in the same beautiful spirit, which was done in that ancient home by Lois and Eunice. Children, and young men, and young women, are finding

their way to Christ after the same simple and easy method. But when there are more of these homes, then there will be more members in all our churches who shall have come into the faith as blossoms come in fullness of beauty under the genial breath of the spring, or fruit comes to the vine under the ripening warmth of summer.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

"And one of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him. And He entered into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman which was in the city, a sinner; and when she knew that He was sitting at meat in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster cruse of ointment, and standing behind at his feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now, when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth Him, that she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. A certain lender had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave the most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And turning to the woman, He said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves. Who is this that even forgiveth sin? And He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—Luke 7:36-50.

X.

THE WOMAN WHO WAS A SINNER.

This narrative opens to our consideration a very delicate and serious subject. But at the outset a word or two of caution will be in place.

There is need of caution lest the incident recorded in the passage now brought forward for study be thought to be the same as the one which the Gospels of Matthew and Mark associate with the last week of Our Lord's ministry. Eminent scholars have made and pressed this claim. It was, however, not one anointing which Our Lord received, but two. The anointing here mentioned He received somewhere up in Galilee, possibly Capernaum; but the other in Bethany. On no reasonable, hardly on any conceivable conjecture, can we make Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, the same person as the woman who was a sinner. The fact that there is a "Simon" in both cases, and that the woman in both cases wipes the feet of our Saviour with the hair of her head, counts for nothing. There might have been two "Simons" as well as two "Judases" and two "Jameses." If, moreover, it occurred to one loving and loyal woman to show her profound regard for Jesus in this way, it might to another. Though, as has been suggested by a distinguished student of the Word of God, Mary of

Bethany may somehow have come into a knowledge of what the Galilean woman had done—possibly through Jesus Himself, or the mention of it by some one who was with Him on the occasion—and concluded that this was a fit and beautiful way to testify to her love for the Saviour. But while there are these likenesses in the two narratives, there are sufficient unlikenesses to render it morally certain that Luke did not make a mistake and locate an occurrence so significant where it did not belong. There were two anointings,—one by Mary of Bethany and one by this woman.

Care must be taken, too, not to identify this woman who was a sinner with Mary Magdalene. This identification has sometimes been assumed; and in the Middle Ages the assumption held such sway over the minds of men that song and festival, painting and sculpture and homily, were made to revolve about it. The Magdalene, beautiful in her penitence, holds a large place in all European Art Galleries.

But there was never any good ground for this view. The Authors of the New Testament left nothing to justify the notion of identity. The early writers and commentators rejected the hypothesis. Modern writers and commentators, with a few conspicuous exceptions, are equally decided in an adverse opinion. To make Mary Magdalene bear this burden has been fitly called a “posthumous slander.” Few are the instances in history where such a marked and enduring wrong has been done to an individual as the confounding of this woman with the woman who anointed the feet of Our Lord at the meal to which He was invited by the Pharisee.

Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala, the town, in all probability, of her nativity and early years, was unfortunate. It was out of her that the "seven devils" were cast. So, as another has said, "We must think of her as having had, in their most aggravated forms, some of the phenomena of mental and spiritual disease which are met with in other demoniacs, the wretchedness of despair, the divided consciousness, the preternatural frenzy, and the long-continued fits of silence." But thus wretched, and sinful as all souls are before God, there was nothing to compromise her in her personal purity and social relations. The trail of the serpent of licentiousness was not over her. She was not one of those poor abandoned creatures whose lips drop honey, but whose feet go down to death. She was tormented and miserable; but her trouble sprang from other sources than a life of shame.

The woman who was a sinner was unchaste,—openly, flagrantly, and as the remark of Simon indicates, notoriously unchaste. She was a sinner, as all are sinners in the divine sight, but she was a sinner in the peculiar sense and with the peculiar emphasis, that she was lewd, and was following the career of a professional courtesan. Like Mary Magdalene she was unfortunate, and one to be pitied with all fullness of compassion; but the pitiableness of her condition consisted not so much in the fact that she was possessed of evil spirits as that she had surrendered to evil spirits, and was led by them down into the lowest depths of humiliation,—the lowest depths to which a woman can ever descend. She had taken the precious

pearl of her maidenly purity and flung it down before swinish men that with beastly feet they might trample it into the mire.

This is the woman who figures in the story.

Jesus was partaking of refreshments at the house of a Pharisee. This Pharisee was not a disciple of Our Lord; but he was one of the better class of his sect, and no doubt entertained a certain measure of respect both for Jesus personally and for His teachings. Why the man invited Jesus into his house is only guess-work; but it is thought he might have been moved by some of the words Jesus had just spoken, and was willing at least to show his candor. At any rate he asked Him to "eat with him." As was His wont Jesus accepted the invitation. Other guests were present,—"friends and rich neighbors," it may be, whom he thought it would be an honor to Jesus to meet. What the company talked about until the woman appeared we are not told. But as those present would be likely to be only slightly in sympathy with Jesus, we may be sure that all eyes would be open to watch every movement of this ill-understood guest, and all ears would be open to catch any word from His lips.

After the eastern custom at meals the whole party was in a reclining position. Leaning upon His left arm, with His head toward the center, and with His feet, now released of their sandals, stretched back, Jesus lay there with the rest of the group. While in this attitude the Woman approached Him and made her demonstration of devotion. She said nothing, so far as appears, but simply stood there and began to

weep. The tears which rolled hot and fast down her cheeks fell on the feet of the Master. She stooped reverently down and wiped His moistened feet with her hair. Quickened in her spiritual aspirations by the sight of Him, and growing bolder by what she had done without rebuke, she ventured to make a still further advance and kiss His feet. Then to add to the evidence of her reverence and trust she took a fine alabaster flask of precious ointment which she had brought along with her and shed its perfumed contents where her kisses had fallen. Could she have reached Jesus without being obtrusive, or without giving offense to the company, she would doubtless have poured the costly offering on His head; but as it was she just anointed His feet, and awaited results.

She did not have to wait long. The Pharisee who was host of the occasion, and carefully observant, no doubt, of all that was going on about him, when he saw what the woman had done, began to say to himself, but to say it in a way which was perfectly intelligible to Jesus, that if his special Guest had been a prophet, or rather, perhaps, the prophet that He was claimed to be, He would have perceived who and what manner of woman this was which touched Him; He would have perceived that she was a sinner. Of course this remark carried with it the implication that Jesus could have no word of sympathy, no hand of help, and no saving grace for a poor depraved woman. Our Lord very soon set this notion aside, and He set it aside in a very impressive and memorable way.

But the parable He constructed, and the sharp comparison He made between the Pharisee himself and

the woman, are too familiar to need any detailed treatment. The upshot of it all was that Simon was severely rebuked, and the woman was pardoned and sent away in peace. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." "Thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

A word further, however, about this Woman's conversion. In all the cases of accepting and following Christ thus far examined there has been something peculiar to each in the way of finding the new life. What is the unique feature in the turning of the Woman who was a sinner from the ways of sin to the ways of purity? The answer is close at hand. She just embodied her thought in an act,—in an act of reverent and loving devotion. So far as is revealed, she spoke no word, she made no confession, she put her penitence into no frame of language, she breathed out no requests, she asked for no help; she simply stood there, and let her tears and her kisses and the perfume of her costly ointment tell the story for her. Jesus appears to have asked her no questions, and she answered none. She let her deed be tongue for her thought and desire. It was all understood; the faith that was in the deed,—"Thy faith hath saved thee;" the love that was in the deed,—"she loved much;" the contrition that was in the deed; "standing behind at His feet, weeping;" the consecration that was in the deed of which the broken flask with its perfumed contents was the symbol made everything clear to the mind of Jesus.

It is more than likely the Woman may have heard Jesus in some of his conversations and discourses.

She may have heard Him utter the precious invitation: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." She may have heard more than one of His assurances of salvation for all who would put their trust in Him, no matter how far away or how low down in the moral scale. Having heard these words, and having known, it may be, some of the very persons who had been made new creations in Christ; and burdened in her own heart and ashamed to the inmost core of her being at what she had done and at what she had become, she ventured to throw herself upon the grace of our Lord. Something like this is probable.

But there in the Pharisee's house, where the great word "forgiven" was spoken to her, her only expression, her only plea, was a deed. She embodied all in an act.

The opening up of a matter like this of the Woman who was a sinner, both as respects what she came to be through sin and what she came to be through the saving grace of Christ, suggests two lines of service for all who love our Lord and want to act in His spirit.

The first is a service of prevention. Women must be kept from becoming sinners. Especially must women whose circumstances would be most likely to expose them to the wiles of evil men be safeguarded against yielding to temptation. They must be watched and shielded to such degree that there will be no occasion to mourn over their fall, no occasion to lift them out of the horrible pit of moral ruin into which lapses from virtue so surely plunge them. From the nature

of the case this is not the kind of work for the house-top. But an immeasurable amount of good may be done to this end without attracting public attention; and to do this is to begin at the right place and in the right way.

There is an old proverb, as true as it is old, that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Reformers of all kinds are coming to take note of this principle. Law-makers, educators, ministers, economists, are giving it new recognition. All eyes are opening to the fact that the true way to starve vice is to afford it no feeding; and that the only successful method of checking crime is to restrain the first inclinations towards a criminal career. What tears, what heart-aches, what remorse, what shame, what wretchedness, would have been avoided had the women who have fallen only been kept from falling. What floods of evil influence would have been arrested, and what numberless examples of vice would have been reversed and made to tell for virtue, had there been the right kind and measure of timely restraint. In instances where no amount of reformatory endeavor will prove of any avail, how effective for good might even a little preventive activity tenderly and devoutly put forth, have been! A single hand, stretched out at the opportune moment, may do with ease what a hundred hands find it hard, perhaps quite impossible to do, when the critical point has been passed.

It is no use to say that the fall of women cannot be prevented. In multitudes of cases it can be. Home influences, church influences, school influences, social

fluences, business influences brought systematically to bear on this object would speedily accomplish wonders.

But one of the means for bringing this about, quite as Christian, in my judgment, as some of the softer appliances, is to damn with perpetual ostracism from all decent society the men who deliberately betray innocence and sacrifice innocent womanhood on the altar of their own lusts.

Have you fully realized what imminent and deadly perils await the whole class of girls, some younger and some older, who seek employment in our great cities?

Not long ago a young girl walked into a dry-goods house in Boston and asked for a situation. She was fresh from her country home, and healthy and beautiful. The man to whom she applied said: "No, we have no vacancies." Then he added, with a look and tone which were quickly interpreted by the fine instinct of the pure heart he would have soiled and crushed and flung away: "But you need not be a clerk. You may draw on me, if you will, for five times as much as any salary you can get, and you may dress as elegantly as you please, and do nothing." O, what forbearance there is in heaven that God's anger did not leap out, like hot lightning, and instantly consume this depraved soul!

This, to the shame of our humanity, be it said, is not an isolated instance. Here in Chicago, within a recent period, a young girl, in similar need, fresh from her home, well educated and attractive, making her way into the presence of one of the members of one of the largest business concerns in the city, asked for a posi-

tion. "Yes, we have a place for you." But the salary named seemed inadequate, and the woman expressed her surprise and regret that it was so small. The only reply was: "True, but you know that young women in an establishment like this have other ways of adding to their salaries." Shocked and frightened, and stung in every fiber of her sensitive nature by this suggestion which reeked with the fumes of the pit, this delicate woman rose and fled from the room as a deer would flee from a hound. But he! He is one of the leaders in our community.

These are but two out of what we are bound to believe are innumerable cases in which humiliating propositions are made to young women seeking employment. The gauntlet these two women ran is the gauntlet very large numbers have to run. Their paths are sown thick with dangers. A thousand traps are set for them at every turn. On a thousand pretenses they are decoyed into disgrace and ruin. If there is any process, any influence, any combination of agencies by which these young women can be saved to themselves and to society and to the ends of purity and glory in the life to come for which they have had the breath of life breathed into them by the Creator, all these ought to be employed, and kept employed until there are no more women who are sinners. God's warmest benediction, we may be sure, will rest down on all who are putting forth these preventive endeavors.

The second is a service of rescue. Thousands of the fallen are all about us. No efforts at prevention have been made; or these efforts have proved ineffectual.

The strain of temptation has come; and it has proved too severe to withstand. Yielding to evil influences these wretched women have been swept out and committed to careers of license. They are poor human estrays. They lie under the stigma of universal reproach. They are largely shunned and given over by the good. Should they be wholly shunned and given over? Not if we catch the spirit and follow the example of Christ. Christ was here to seek and to save that which was lost. It is an infinite folly to stand by with folded hands and unuttered protest and unuttered counsel and let people be lost if it is possible to help it; but if they are lost—sunk to the bottom—there is a gospel of salvation for them and a duty of tender love towards them.

One of the special values attached to the study of an incident like this now under consideration is the fresh sense it gives us of the down-reach of the Good News brought to us in the New Testament. It is the genius of the Gospel to help; and to help according to the measure of need. The Gospel is for all emergencies. That word “hopeless” is not to be written, save as the Holy Ghost writes it, on any forehead,—and least of all is it to be taken and flung at a whole class of human beings. Men who were sinners, and even notorious sinners, were not lost beyond all chance of recovery in our Lord’s estimation. It was when He was addressing chief priests and the Elders of the people that Jesus said: “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you.”

Not long since a manager of a Rescue-Home in one

of our large cities wrote these words: "Another wayward one, after three years' wandering, has been returned to her father's house." That establishes the propriety of hope. That makes it clear that the saving of these wildly wayward ones is possible—is possible now as it was back in the Master's day. But think of the glorious victory for which this one rescue stood and of the joy that was in it! "After three years' wandering, back again at her father's house!" Let us hope she was tenderly met. Let us hope there were shoes for her weary feet. Let us hope there were rings for her fingers. Let us hope there was a robe for her new and fresh appareling. Let us hope there was the light of hearty welcome in every eye. Let us hope there was music and dancing and holy merry-making in every room in the old home. For surely the return of a prodigal daughter should not be less a matter of sacred jubilation than the coming back again of a prodigal son.

The fact is, and it may as well be confessed, that we are altogether too dainty with our Christianity. We do not make it sufficiently condescending and compassionate and brotherly and helpful.

Think for a moment of the easy way in which the obligation to be ministrant to men rests upon the preponderant numbers even of those who have named the Name of the Lord.

Robertson has an impassioned passage in which he says: "How passing strange the misery of suffering is, and how questionable the right which two-thirds of the world assume to themselves of filling their ears

with cotton, that the moans may not break in on their silken repose, and that the cry of the toiling thousands may float by on the blast unheard."

Questionable? Nothing was ever less questionable. At the outset God put this instinct of brotherly obligation into the soul. Cain's angry demand to know of the Almighty what he had to do in the way of brotherly guardianship was but an impotent protest against the clear convictions of his own conscience. The answer to the question was not something he needed to know—he knew it already. From that early hour when the blood of righteous Abel began to cry from the ground until this latest moment, all authoritative precepts touching human relations, and all best examples of pure and noble men, and all richest experiences of individual life, have had common convergence upon the magnifying and enforcement of this undying obligation.

The world is where it is, to-day, in moral advancement, through virtue of the practical recognition which this obligation has received from the successive generations. We have our inestimable inheritance of Christian civilization because lofty and heroic souls have been ready to pay the price at which alone a Christian civilization could be purchased. We have this inheritance because there have been men in whom the sense of dutifulness to their kind has been so dominant that they were willing to endure the trial of mockings and scourgings and bonds and imprisonment; were willing to be stoned and sawn asunder and slain with the sword; were willing to undergo destitution and affliction and torment; were willing to wander about in

sheep-skins and goat-skins; were willing to seek hiding from the wrath of infuriated powers, against whose iniquity they dared to lift voice and hand, in deserts and mountains and caves of the earth; were willing to suffer the spoiling of their goods, and to bear reproaches, and to face martyrdom, and to lay down life in all possible forms of surrender, for the weal of humanity.

It is not the men and women who have lived for themselves, and moved about in a mood of serene indifference to the dismal直nesses and agonies of their fellows,—lifting no hand to aid them in bearing their burdens, and uttering no word to soothe their sorrows and encourage them to a higher life; but the men and women, who, drawing their inspiration from above, have gone out of themselves; trampling greed and pleasure under their feet, putting the temptations of earthly ease and earthly honor sternly behind them, and have devoted their choicest powers of head and heart to the helping of the helpless, and the uplifting of the downcast, and the ennobling of the base, and the purifying of the impure, and have kept right on in this holy service till God called them to their reward in heaven. It is these heroic and self-sacrificing spirits who have wrought out for us our most cherished institutions.

Nevertheless, we take these splendid results,—these ripened fruits of others' toils, these boons which have been bought for us by bitterest martyrdoms, these achievements of learning and liberty and law which have been baptized with tears and sanctified with blood, this finer and broader life which has made pos-

sible for us because of the birth-pangs of the travailing generations, and the fruitful guardianship and tuition of those who have been its nursing mothers,—these splendid results, and turn them all over to our own personal advantage and enjoyment, and go on our way as if the solemn duty of still doing and suffering for others was a tale that is told. So hard is it, and so slow and reluctant are we, to act on that conception of life which makes all true existence a giving rather than a getting. He that findeth loseth, and he that loseth findeth.

There are those all up and down the land who have caught the spirit and who in their lives illustrate the devotion of the brave and consecrated souls of the past. Were it not so our humanity, as surely as an old neglected building, would speedily rot and crumble to its fall. Hunger fed, thirst quenched, nakedness clothed, sickness alleviated, ignorance instructed, great missionary enterprises kindling lights caught from the skies which salute each other from hill-top to hill-top all around the globe, hospitals reared, schools established and endowed, operations of reform systematically carried on for the benefit of the low and dissipated, time and thought and sympathy and vitality voluntarily laid down on the altar of human need, the vast sums given year by year to help forward the Kingdom, all testify to the fact that there are multitudes of lives which have risen superior to self-indulgence and are really Christ-like.

But the lamentable fact remains that these things—in the bulk of them—are done not by the many but by the few. The out-going, self-denying, brotherly-

helpful feeling is not strong and universal even in the church of Christ. Multitudes of the avowed followers of Him who went about doing good, and who at last gave up His life for a world lying in wickedness, will yield more readily to the dictates of personal interest and worldly customs and the requirements of social life, than to those divine appeals—always so pathetic and persuasive for all who have an ear to hear—which God makes to us through the woes of the world. It would seem sometimes as if men had never so much as read the affectionate counsel: “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Of those other words so significant and constraining “For even Christ pleased not Himself.”

Think still further of the feeble and imperfect apprehension there seems to be in so many minds of what has already been referred to as the tender down-reach of the Gospel.

Worldly methods and habits of estimating things hold multitudes of church members in their grip. We prefer the top to the bottom of society. Our standards are commercial and social and aesthetic rather than those laid down in the New Testament. There is not a church nor a denomination in existence which does not point with a kind of secret pride to whatever wealth it may control, and to whatever scholarship and culture and refinement it may include within its circle. The gravitations on the human side are upward and toward exclusiveness. Ambition displaces the spirit of dutiful consecration. A deceptive eagerness for worldly power largely supplants the desire for the power of the Holy Spirit. Single churches, individual

denominations, almost always begin low down. They have to do so. But unless they are watchful of themselves, and apply the appropriate checks, the passions and infirmities of human nature will carry them more and more out of sympathy with the masses. They start right, and they run well for a season; for they keep in close affiliation with the poor and the desolate aid the vile and the outcast. Nevertheless, after a while, the instincts of a divine love—the true Gospel instinct—becomes interpenetrated with worldliness. Then they advance into higher ranges and appeal to what is called “the better class.” With a desire which steadily grows by what it feeds upon they strike still higher and aim for the rich, the cultivated, the influential—the leaders in the business world and in refined society. Then, unless they are very careful, and very observant of providences, and very open to the influences of the Spirit, they come quite to forget for what ends God has a church or a body of churches in the world. It falls to my lot to be obliged to remember—not perhaps with the humiliation belonging to so grave a departure from the proprieties of religion—how I once gave mortal offense to a direct descendant of John Davenport, who began his ministry in New Haven abroad in the open air, by venturing to pray for the bodily comfort and spiritual welfare of the men who sat out on the seats of the carriages in which no inconsiderable number of the congregation were about to be taken home. What right had a minister of the Gospel to obtrude the care of a poor coachman upon God, or to make mention of him in the presence

of an assembly so highly educated and aristocratic, and who might naturally be expected to wish to have the divine ear all to themselves!

How often we hear the self-complacent boast: "We have a very intelligent congregation;" or, "We have a very nice class of people;" or, "We have a large number of men of scholarly attainments and influence." The tendency is to run after the "intelligent" people, and the "respectable" people, and the "nice" people, and the "accomplished" people. They ought to be run after. The Gospel would set us to running after them. We are to run after them, however, not for any of these low earthly reasons, but because they have souls to be saved. A great many in a city like ours who pass for intelligent and respectable and nice and accomplished people better be run after and overtaken as quickly as possible. They are in awful peril; and unless they are reached and rescued they will inevitably share the fate of the most degraded and abandoned sinner. The aim, however, to conciliate this class for other ends than their personal salvation, reveals the secular taint that is about us.

The thing for us to do, if we would view matters from the standpoint of Jesus, is to strike through whatever is outward and discover and keep ourselves evermore alive to the fact that the soul dwarfs down all possible surroundings, and overmasters all possible circumstances, and in its own light, and in the light of eternity, makes all these superficial considerations of high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, things impertinent to be named. It is more to our taste, no doubt, to move in refined spheres and where

everything is agreeable, than to drop down into sympathetic and guiding contact with confessed drunkards and gamblers and vagrants and thieves and libertines and women of the street; but if we were true to the teaching of the Gospel and the Spirit of the Gospel we shall recognize a mission to the vile and criminal, and to all the wretched victims of dissipation and rioting and debauchery.

Now one of the most effectual correctives of the dainty way in which we use our Christianity, and of the narrow, selfish views which we come to entertain concerning the mission of the Christian church, is to dwell on an incident like this in which the woman who was a sinner was freely forgiven and restored to virtue,—to dwell on it until the profound significance of it is burned into the soul.

How pure Christ was. He was as clean as the lilies. He was as spotless as the stars. The light which shone in His soul was the clear white light of heaven. He was the sinless One. This woman was a lost woman. She was of the wreckage of society. Soul and body had been turned over by her to vile and degrading uses. Without self-respect, she had forfeited the respect of other people. Yet impure as she was Christ put His own purity to her service and saved her with an everlasting salvation.

This is a typical illustration of what the Gospel is, and of what it was meant to do. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." It is not the righteous, but sinners whom He came to call to repentance. Alas, with what blind eyes

do we read these words! We are like nurses who will consent to sit up and watch with well folk, or with patients just sick enough to add a little spice to the entertainment; but when it comes to the poor invalids who are weak and petulant and have shocking diseases, shake their heads and say: "We cannot put ourselves to inconvenience and run risks—they must look out for themselves." Whereas the sicker the soul the more need of care. The further away the soul has wandered, the more urgent the necessity that it be sought and saved. It is the one lost sheep; it is the one lost piece of silver; it is the one lost son, which occasions the anxiety and leads to the diligent searching and the patient watching. "Are men bad?" "Are women astray from virtue?" The Gospel answers: "That is the pressing reason why they should be taken in hand and made good and virtuous." Are men and women impure? The Gospel answers: "Then purify them; for that is why there is a Gospel at all—that the unclean may be cleansed." Are men and women unlovely? The Gospel answers: "The more imperative is it that they be warmed by love into loveliness." Are men and women low? The Gospel answers: "By so much as any one individual feels that he is higher than any other, by so much does God call the higher to help the lower." This is the Spirit of Christ. This is the idea and aim of the New Testament. This is the hope of a guilty world. This is the sublime lesson taught by the conversion of the Woman who was a sinner.

SERGIUS PAULUS.

"And when they had gone through the whole island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus, which was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation), withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith. But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fastened his eyes on him and said: O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord."—Acts 13:6-12.

XI.

SERGIUS PAULUS.

In considering the conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul, we are dealing with the first fruits of which mention is made of the missionary ministry of the Great Apostle. On his way to Damascus, mad with the persecuting spirit, Paul, not then designated by this name, was suddenly smitten down and brought into the faith of Christ. What occurred to him, or what he did, in the interval between the remarkable change which he experienced at that time and the moment when he appeared at Paphos, near the extreme western end of the Island of Cyprus, face to face with the high official who through his instruction and influence was to find his way into the saving grace of the Son of God, it is not necessary to rehearse. It is enough to know that he had come into consciousness of his new self and his mission, that he had secured the confidence and warm approval of his fellow-believers in the Lord, and that he was now fairly entered upon his marvelous career of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Cyprus is an island, lying in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean Sea, and a little less than fifty miles from the coast of Syria. It is about one hundred and forty miles long by fifty wide. It has an area of nearly two-thirds of Connecticut, or almost three times as great as the state of Rhode Island. Lacking in water

supply, though it has high mountains, the climate of Cyprus is yet fine and its soil fertile. Situated as it is, and attractive as it always has been in its physical conditions and moral atmosphere to persons of self-indulgent inclinations and habits, the inference follows of itself that the island, through all the many centuries in which it has been known, would be likely to be a foot-ball in the play for supremacy of greedy and contending nations. This is the fact. Original occupants, supposed to be descendants of Japhet, Phoenicians, Assyrians, Egyptians, Romans, Saracens, Venetians, Turks, Englishmen, have each in turn had possession and control—some of them for hundreds of years in unbroken succession—of this coveted bit of our earth. By stipulation entered into secretly between Great Britain and Turkey only a few days before the assembling of the Berlin Congress in 1878, and brought out to the amazement of the assembled diplomatists during the sessions of the Congress, Turkey turned Cyprus over to England, and in return for this surrender of occupation receives an annual payment of something like a half million of dollars.

From the first, as has been already hinted, Cyprus has had an unenviable reputation for licentiousness. Venus was fabled to have risen here from the sea; and the island was devoted to the worship of this fair but voluptuous and misleading goddess. The word "Cyprian" came early to stand for the characterization which in all civilized lands and languages implies that a woman is lost to virtue and has given her life over to the gratification of the baser passions. Society was shockingly corrupt; and though there was more re-

finement than in Sodom, yet the sins of Sodom were the sins of Cyprus. The Orient and the Occident here met in sensual revel; and the vices which were peculiar to Phoenicia and the later Rome found among this people ample scope for their indulgence.

Cyprus became a Roman province a little more than a half century before the birth of Christ. When the Apostle along with Barnabas and Mark visited it, the island had been under the dominion of the seven-hilled city for upwards of a hundred years. From the time of Augustus down through the reign of Nero Roman provinces were of two classes. There were the provinces which were directly subject to the Emperor. These included all those where an army was requisite to enforce law and maintain order. Then there were the provinces which were under the direction of the Senate and the people. The governor who was sent out by the Emperor was called "Propraetor." He went forth to his duties clothed and attended with all the pomp of a military commander; and he did not return until he was ordered back by the chief ruler of the Empire. The official who represented the Senate and the people in conducting the affairs of a province was called a "Proconsul." He was appointed from a certain number by lot; and accompanying him were persons bearing ax and rod as signs of his authority; but he had no military escort and no military power. At the end of the year he had to give up his place, and render his account. As will be readily seen, this scheme of dividing appointments between the Emperor and the Senate was a shrewd one; for while it seemed to give the people a voice in the government of the

outposts of the vast realm, it yet kept the army in strictest subordination to the will and word of the sovereign. When it should come to a question of the rival claims between the throne and the people, the entire force of the nation would be found securely lodged in the hands of the Caesar.

Sergius Paulus was a “Proconsul” and not a “Propraetor,” for the reason that Cyprus as being included in Asia was assigned to the Senate. It had once been an imperial province; but later it was changed back and fell under the administration of the popular branch of the Roman government. Critics who knew the former of these facts, but did not know the latter, thought they had a fine point on Luke for designating the Roman official by the term he used. But Luke was right, and the over-hasty critics were wrong. Syria was an imperial province; and the men sent out to rule it were styled “Propraetors,” as the men who ruled its dependencies were called “Procurators” or “High Stewards.” Luke conforms strictly to the facts; and whether he speaks of Cyrenius as “governor” of Syria, or Sergius Paulus as “Proconsul” of Cyprus, he is historically accurate.

Sergius Paulus is introduced to us in this narrative as “a man of understanding.” Taking into view all the statements and circumstances of the case, it would not be going far astray to make the “understanding” mean that he was an open-minded man,—intelligent, more than ordinarily eager to know, and above all careful and candid. There was a moral element in his nature and a spiritual hunger in his soul which gave elevation to his thinking and invested his

conduct with an atmosphere of seriousness. He was a man apparently possessed with the conviction that there is truth in this universe; that there is truth suited to the need and longings of each and all hearts; and his truth he wanted to find and make his own. Anybody who could bring him this truth, or who could put him in the way of ascertaining it for himself, would find his mind hospitable.

It is only by looking at the man in this light, and putting this estimate on his intellectual and moral qualities, that we get a satisfactory clew to his attitude towards both Bar-Jesus, the Sorcerer, and Paul and his associates.

This Bar-Jesus was a strange character. He was a Jew. He made pretensions to the gifts of a prophet. He was a magician, and claimed to be in league with invisible energies. But in all this he was only one of a class of professionals who by smooth talk and tricks sought to pervert religious instincts and play on the easy credulity of the people of his day.

Nor is it any impeachment of his good sense or sanity that the Roman Proconsul had listened to this Sorcerer and taken an interest in his teachings and come in some considerable measure under his influence. Men are often betrayed and misled by superstition, especially if it be of a subtle sort, not because the hunger for the unseen and eternal means so little, but because it means so much. Men buy gold bricks of sharpers on the street, not because money is of so little consequence to them and they have it to throw away, but because they set so high a value on money and want all they can get. It was not on the ground that

he was so foolish, and could be so easily duped by a cunning impostor, that Sergius Paulus lent an ear to Elymas, but for the reason that he was so serious in his nature, and was so intensely eager in his desire to be in the right with his own conscience and with God. Before charging this Proconsul with shallowness in giving any heed to the words of the Sorcerer, it will be well for us to remember how many men of our own time, and some of them even in our own community—eminent merchants, capitalists, manufacturers, hard-headed dealers on boards of trade, bankers, lawyers of distinction and judges of high standing, and politicians, along with women of culture and influence not a few—have wandered off into Spiritualism and Christian Science and other popular vagaries which are just as baseless and just as offensive to the sober conclusions of sound judgment, as were the claims pressed by the false prophet upon the Roman official back there at Paphos.

The simple fact is that both the Sorcerer with his wiles and the Proconsul with his credulity were symptoms of the times. In a brief but crowded passage in one of the chapters contributed by him to the "Life and Epistles of St. Paul," Dean Howson has set forth the desolate spiritual condition of Rome at the period now under review. Faith in things reasonable had no longer any place in the thinking of educated minds; but faith in things ridiculous and absurd abounded. Fortune-tellers from the east, and Greeks with all sorts of crank notions, flocked to the Eternal City. "The gods of Egypt and Phrygia found unfailing votaries." * * * The more remote districts of Asia Minor

sent their itinerant soothsayers; Syria sent her music and her medicines; Chaldea her ‘Babylonian numbers’ and ‘mathematical calculations.’” The Jews, as seen in the instance in hand, contributed a share to those confusing and demoralizing influences. “The Jewish beggar-woman was the gypsy of the first century.” The taint of superstition was in all the thought and life of the people. Incredible as it may seem, Marius, one of the greatest generals Rome ever produced, and whose splendid victories over Jugurtha and the Cimbri and the Teutons made a story immortal, regulated his campaigns by the divinations of a Jewish prophetess he kept in his camp. Caesar was not above seeking information from Oriental astrology. Tiberius in his retreat at Capri had his Chaldean magicians about him. The air was pervaded with the poison of superstition. Men believed in nothing which it was rational to believe in; but creeds which were at once fanatical and corrupting had ready adherents in all classes of society. The whole head was sick and the whole heart was faint.

This sad temper of the times naturally explains why the Proconsul came so easily under the influence of the Sacerdote. Men were at sea in their faith, and they were striking out in every direction for something to which to cling. No wonder they clutched eagerly at every straw which came floating towards them. The human soul was made for God; and it has in it a hunger for God; and if it cannot find God and feed on Him, it will feed on husks.

But notwithstanding the hold which Elymas appeared to have on him, Sergius Paulus sent for the

Apostle and his associates that he might hear what they had to say on the great question with which he was evidently most concerned. It was this act on the part of the Proconsul which brought Paul into direct conflict with the Jewish impostor. For apprehensive of what would be the outcome of this interview, and with the audacious malignity of his guild, the false prophet hastened to throw himself between this earnest and candid inquirer after the truth and the teachers who had the truth for him. His pride, his evil disposition, and quite likely his own selfish interests, had each and all a part in constraining him to do what he might to keep this high official from coming into the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

When the mothers would bring their babes to Christ that He might lay His hands on them and bless them, it was the disciples who, under an imperfect sense of the dignity of their Lord, advanced and tried to prevent their approach. When Blind Bartimaeus was seeking with loud cries to arrest the attention of Jesus, the Son of David, that he might receive his sight, it was the disciples again, who, under this same imperfect sense of the dignity of their Lord, sought to hush him down into some sort of propriety. In this instance, however, the opposition came from exactly the source from which it might have been anticipated. It came from a man whose own mind was blinded, and who in his character and habits was the incarnation of evil. It came from a man who, himself worldly and wicked and corrupt, wanted to keep everybody else in this same guilty and lamentable condition.

But Paul met him on his own chosen ground. It

was to be a contest for a Roman Proconsul,—a contest to see whether the man should become a child of light or remain a dupe of darkness; and the challenge which was promptly made by the impostor was as promptly met by the Apostle. Elijah, there at Mount Carmel, was not more ready to encounter the prophets of Baal than was the later servant of the same divine Lord to measure strength with the false prophet there at Paphos, when he madly presumed to interfere and stay the progress of a soul to God. Called and separated, as was Barnabas also, to the missionary work of the ministry by the Holy Spirit, and sent forth on his sublime undertaking guided and girded by the Holy Spirit, Paul at this critical moment was filled with the Spirit,—filled as we must believe for the special work he was to do, and in the fullness and power of the Spirit this is what he said to the poor miserable Sorcerer who, with himself and his co-witnesses and co-workers and others in all probability, stood there in the presence of Sergius Paulus: “O full of all guile and all villainy, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?”

There was no mincing of matters in this,—no beating about the bush, no gloving of the hand which smote, and no palliating with soft speech what was at once a fearful exposure and an awful indictment. This impostor passed by the name of “Bar-Jesus,” or son of Joshua; but he was not a son of Joshua,—he was a “son of the devil,” with a heart “full of all guile and all villainy.” He did not call himself a “sorcerer,”—that would have been offensive to him and a betrayal

of his character and vocation,—but he was posing as “Elymas,” a “magician,” a “wise one,” a “sage.” All the same he was not a ‘magician,’ a “wise one,” a “sage,”—he was a crafty and hypocritical schemer whose pretensions needed to be stripped from him, and needed to be stripped from him not the less but all the more in view of the fact that he was able now and then to attach eminent personages to his following. He claimed to be a prophet, possessed of the sacred powers and qualified for the sacred functions of one whose business it is to give instruction concerning the duties of men to God and to society; but he was not a prophet—he was an “enemy of all righteousness” and a “perverter of the right ways of the Lord.” There before Sergius Paulus and all, less or more, who were in attendance at the gathering, this is what the Apostle told Bar-Jesus. He faced him down. He tore off his disguises. He opened his bad heart to the gaze of all who cared to look into it. He let daylight into him.

The Apostle, however, did not stop with this exposure and denunciation of the Sorcerer. He went further. He used the special power with which he had been endowed by the Holy Spirit to discipline the man and make him feel the divine displeasure. “And now behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.” The stroke was gentle. It was only for a season—a limited time—that the sun was to be obscured to his vision. It was but a temporary inconvenience he was to suffer. But he was to be made to

know—and made to know in an impressive way—that such an attitude as he had taken and such a line of conduct as he had pursued, could not be taken and pursued with impunity.

What, then, was the special justification for this severe treatment? It was not merely that the man was wicked, and in his wickedness was plying his deceptive arts to his own selfish advantage and the injury and degradation of the community; but it was that he attempted to come between a soul and God. The most harmful thing, and, in my judgment, the most wicked thing which can be done by one man to another is to embarrass and hinder, and especially to thwart, attempted approaches to God. To do a man bodily harm is bad. To circumvent a man in his business progress, to throw him back on the world defeated and disheartened is a serious injury. To get in a man's way and prevent his realizing honest and otherwise possible aspirations is to do a mischief for which no thoughtful person would care to be answerable. But deliberately to place obstacles, whether arguments or doubts or sinister suggestions or sneers, in front of one who is sincerely trying to find God that he may do His will and share in His fellowship and enjoy His peace, would seem to be a wrong which can have no mate save sinning against the Holy Spirit. Men are doing this sort of thing all the time—often, it may be, without any intention of doing it; but when one stops to think what it is to hold back a soul from God, to keep a soul which has some desire for light still in the darkness, to keep a soul which wants to feed on the bread of heaven still trying to satisfy spiritual hunger

with husks, to keep a soul which has longings in it to climb to the stars still groveling in the dust and grime of the earth, it will not take long to see that it is something appalling. It is nothing less than dreadful not to be all the time leading souls to God; but to keep souls back from God,—that is monstrous!

Here was a man of understanding. He held a high and responsible position in the state. He was educated and thoughtful. He had in him some of the moral purpose of the old Romans. So far from sharing in the skepticism and indifference to religion into which the people of his nation had degenerated, he was ready to receive help from whatever source it might be brought to him. So eager was he in his quest for light that even the artificial flame of an impostor attracted him. Rumors reached him of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. Their theme was salvation through faith in a crucified and risen Christ. He wanted to see them and hear them and judge for himself whether they could render any assistance to one whose soul was full of silent struggles and who was possessed with a great longing to know and enjoy God. He sent for them to come to him. They came. But at some critical moment in the interview, at the beginning, or during the progress of it, or at the end, it is immaterial which, this impostor stepped in and tried to dissuade the Proconsul from accepting the truth which was announced by the Apostle, and to prevent his coming into the faith and fellowship of Jesus Christ. Had he succeeded in his evil design and in his impertinent interference, Sergius Paulus would never have found the firm resting place he sought for

his troubled soul. Is it easy to think of any injury possible to be done to one which is so fatal and far-reaching? To be forced by a stroke of divine power to submit to blindness for a season seems to be but a slight penalty for a wrong so great and appalling as was attempted by this Elymas.

In spite of the frantic efforts of the false prophet, however, the Proconsul became a disciple of our Lord. He found his way into the light and comfort of faith. "Then the Proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord." He was a "man of understanding," and the story of Christ as it was unfolded to his thought appeared to him to be a reasonable story. The truths tenderly but clearly revealed to him in the marvelous record of the Son of God—His coming to us from the Father, His luminous teaching, His perfect example, His sufferings for sinners on the cross, His triumphant resurrection—were not only what he needed, but what he consciously wanted. One can imagine as the facts were opened to him how he said to himself: "This exactly suits my necessity and meets my craving."

Judging from the brief statement of the passage just recited, and not taking circumstances into consideration, one would be likely to conclude that Sergius Paulus was brought to the Lord by the sign which was wrought before his eyes,—the smiting of the sorcerer with temporary blindness. He was greatly impressed by this, no doubt, for, notwithstanding all that the critics may say to the contrary, there is a convincing value in miracles. It is simply inconceivable that Jesus should have wrought miracles, or that the

Apostles should have been empowered to work them, or that the record of them should have been preserved in the New Testament, were they without any worth or influence as evidences of the validity of the supernatural claims of our Lord and His chosen exponents; but in all probability, as has been already intimated, the whole subject of salvation through faith in Christ was carefully considered. Questions were asked and questions were answered; and the result of it was that the man's reason as well as his heart was satisfied. He found peace in believing.

In this conversion of Sergius Paulus there was a double victory for the Gospel.

First of all it was a victory in the face and against the forces of almost every base and degrading form of opposition which the truth as it is in Jesus had to encounter in Paul's day, and which it has had to encounter since. Cyprus stood for immorality and vice; and nearly every degree of ignorance and every fashion of superstition and every kind of sensuality and sin had embodiment in the Sorcerer. In the defeat of the Sorcerer there was the prophecy of the ultimate mastery of all error and vice and crime.

Then, in the second place, it was a victory over a thoughtful and cultivated mind in high station. The soul of Sergius Paulus was in itself of no more value than the soul of Bar-Jesus, or of the meanest slave who walked the streets of Paphos and did the bidding of his master. But in point of influence and outlook on the future it was of much consequence to win this Roman official to the ways of our Lord. Paul, as another has noted, had been commissioned to bear the

name of Jesus Christ before kings. Sergius Paulus was the representative of the kingly power; and in his yielding there was a foretokening of the yielding in due time of the mighty Roman Empire itself, and in due time still again of all the empires of the earth. Sergius Paulus was the first fruit of a harvest that has been already glorious and which shall be still more glorious in the future.



CORNELIUS.

"And Peter opened his mouth and said: Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him."—Acts 10:34-35.

XII.

CORNELIUS.

The story of the conversion of Cornelius is in every way remarkable. His own personal experience in the change which came to him; the experience of the apostle who was used of God to help him into his new spiritual attitude and outlook; and the significance of his turning to the Lord by one who was not of the stock of Israel at such a juncture in the development of the Kingdom of Christ, make the narrative not only profoundly instructive, but invest it with a sacred fascination.

Cornelius was a centurion. He was in command of a company of Italian soldiers, and was stationed at Caesarea, a city situated on the Palestine coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and built by Herod the Great. Judging by the name he bore, which takes us back to the name of some of the most illustrious families of Rome, the centurion himself was an Italian.

Cornelius was evidently an intelligent, sober-minded man, calm in his disposition, serious in his purpose, and of a singularly deep religious nature. Like others of the worthy remnant of his morally decaying nation who had not followed the leaders of opinion into a wholly despairing mood or a scornful indifference to divine things, he hungered in his inmost soul for God, and in virtue of this feeling his heart responded warmly to the spiritual ideas and habits of the people

who were about him. He came to be known as a man of marked piety and great reverence, as one who wondered his house in godliness, who had an open hand for the poor, and who kept his heart in communion with the Father through prayer. These are the qualities and characteristics ascribed to him, and this is the beautiful language in which the Scriptures have immortalized his memory: "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

The description recalls that other centurion whom Jesus met at Capernaum. The testimony of the elders who, at the request of this officer, came to our Lord to secure his assistance in behalf of a bond servant who was lying at the point of death was that he was worthy of this special interposition inasmuch as he "loved their nation" and had "built them a synagogue." Both were men of rare spirit, and both were conscious that there was something better for them than had been brought to their knowledge either by Greek philosophers or Roman moralists. They were of the elect few of the vast whole of whom Paul took note in his address at Athens who had not forgotten that they were the offspring of God—the universal Father—and had not neglected to seek after Him, if haply they might find Him. Such men are living proofs that the human soul was made for God and can find no real rest outside of God.

Though devout and prayerful and benevolent, and in deep sympathy with the Jews in what was fundamental in their religion, it is not likely that either of these centurions had membership in the Jewish church. Ram-

ey, who has recently written of St. Paul in such a fresh and vigorous way, and whom it has become largely the fashion to quote and follow, says that Cornelius, the centurion now under consideration, "was proselyte," not a proselyte of "the sanctuary," but a proselyte of "the gate." Of course a scholar so able and distinguished as this Aberdeen Professor, and one who has been so earnest and successful in much of his work, and some of whose conclusions are certainly beyond question, has not been led to this view without reasons which have weight and are satisfactory to his own mind. The main fact which convinces him is that Cornelius is in part described in the very language which is always employed in the book of Acts to designate a proselyte of the gate. He is always called one who "fears God."

But this inference, even though based on grounds ordinarily so decisive, cannot be admitted. To admit it would be to belittle the significance of the vision which appeared to Peter on the housetop, and to belittle also the end which was reached through the vision in allowing Cornelius to come into the full fellowship of the Christian Church. As has already been put in evidence, Cornelius was a man of faith and prayer and sweet charity. He longed for the truth. He had ideals of fellowship with a Being above him,—a Being only vaguely apprehended but felt to be surely in existence, which he had not realized. He had aspirations for knowledge and purity and for certification of the hope of life beyond which burned dimly on the altar of his heart, which had not been satisfied. All his faculties in the full force and combination of them

went out after God. That was the cry in him, sometimes silent and sometimes uttered—the pathetic yearning of his soul for God. Still he was a pagan. He was a restless pagan. He was an inquiring pagan. He was a sincere pagan. Better balanced than Sergius Paulus, and less easily misled by the spiritual quackery of empty pretenders, yet like the Roman Proconsul he wanted to be helped, and in both mind and heart he was open to any help which might be brought to him. Like the struggling bud of a fair lily down in the mire and depths of the pool, he was trying to push up to the surface where the warm sunlight plays and lingers. In his thinking and prayers and alms he had turned his face towards the people who seemed to know much of God. By his candor and generosity and devoutness, he had, too, gained the esteem of these people. Nevertheless he was a pagan. He was outside the Jewish church. It is this fact which gives its point and high import to this story.

Turning from Cornelius to Peter this becomes clear.

It was drawing on towards the noon hour. The time was at hand when the body was to be refreshed with food and the soul cheered and strengthened by communion with God. The Apostle went up to the flat roof of the house where he was staying to offer prayer. He was there in retirement, with no eye upon him save the divine eye, to render his thanks and make his supplications. A sudden hunger seized him, but lingering, he fell into a trance. This means, according to my apprehension, that through the over-brooding of the Divine Spirit, and for the time being, he became inwardly mastered and absorbed, so that he was lifted

out of the realm of the senses and had conscious experience only of the things which the Spirit wished him to see and to know. Losing his perception of the world about him, his freshly illuminated soul caught the fair form of a truth, sky-robed and radiant, which it was of all consequence both to propagators of the Gospel and to mankind to understand, and to understand as soon as possible. Dim of eye to outward realities, with the eye of the inner man this rapt Apostle was permitted to see, or rather constrained to see, a breadth and comprehensiveness in the principles and application of the principles of the Kingdom of God which no mind except the mind of the Master had ever taken in before.

It all came about through a wonderful vision. Shut out from the world by his trance, and shut in with the Spirit, the heavens were opened to his gaze. He saw a vessel, or a great sheet, as near as he could describe it, knit at the four corners, and let down out of the skies to the earth. In it were all manner of creatures,—beasts, creeping things, fowls of the air. On the descent of this vessel or sheet there came a voice calling on him to kill and eat. He was hungry. His hunger gave shape to the imagery under which he was to learn his all-important lesson. Hardly any other form in which the instruction could have been communicated would have been so effective. For the Jews, especially Jews of the strict class to which Peter had always belonged, were exceedingly careful about what they ate. Very naturally, therefore, the Apostle not yet broadened out to the full dimensions of the love and aim of the Great Teacher, shrank back and said he

must not do it. This was not the kind of repast of which he felt at liberty to partake. "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." The distinction between things clean and unclean instituted in the ceremonial law had been abolished on the coming of Christ; but Peter had not yet risen up into sympathy with this idea. This was why he had to be put to school to the vision he beheld and trained out of his race pride and narrowness. "Not so, Lord." He was too dainty and delicate in his tastes. The great commission which he had heard was: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations—" no distinctions—"baptising them"—without distinction—"into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the consummation of the age." But this was not enough to liberate his mind and conquer his prejudices. In his view of men there were still distinctions of clean and unclean. Then there came a second voice: "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common." After this had been done thrice, the vessel disappeared. But the great words, the significant words, the key words of the whole disclosure, still lingered: "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

Not all at once, however, did Peter learn this lesson. Few men ever do. It takes time to come into the mastery, and still more to yield to the mastery of conceptions which are new and revolutionary. He was "perplexed." The vision was a mystery to him, and the secret or intent of his strange experience he could

not quite divine. But he was not long to remain in doubt and confusion of mind. For thirty-five miles down the coast, at Joppa, God, whose ways are not our ways, had been working on another heart and getting it ready, not only to receive a great and crowning blessing, but to interpret to this bewildered Apostle the meaning and purpose of what he had seen. As a result of this preparation which had been going on at Joppa, and while Peter was still agonizing over the problem of his vision, three men stood at the gate of the tanner's house and asked for the guest whom he was entertaining. They had come from Cornelius.

Going back for a moment we shall see why. The centurion had found much truth; but he had not found the large, vital, saving truth which came into the world through Jesus Christ. He had attained unto highly commendable excellencies of character; but, as with Saul of Tarsus, there were standards of righteousness not yet reached, and elements of spiritual life not yet secured and wrought into his own soul. Like Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night; like the young man whom Jesus loved, he still lacked a thing essential to his own peace and to complete conformity to the will of God. He was to be put in the way of realizing this essential thing.

"He saw in a vision openly, as it were, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him, and saying to him: Cornelius. And he, fastening his eyes upon him, and being affrighted, said: What is it, Lord? And he said unto him: Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before

God. And now send men to Joppa, and fetch one Simon, who is surnamed Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. And when the angel that spake unto him was departed, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually; and having rehearsed all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa."

These were the three men who were at the gate. This was the mission on which they had come. They were there in virtue of instructions given by an angel to their master to get Peter to go up to Caesarea and tell the story of the Cross to a Roman soldier.

In due time they were face to face,—the Apostle and the centurion,—there in the residence of the officer, with the "six" who accompanied them and the "many" who had come together on the invitation of Cornelius, round about them. Each rehearsed his story. Peter reminded those present of the unlawfulness—this was under current interpretation of the Levitical law—of what he had done in coming to them and entering into these relations with them; but instructed by his vision, and re-assured and urged on by the Spirit, he was there "without gainsaying," so he declared, to learn what was desired of him. Speaking for himself and the others, Cornelius said: "We are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things which have been commanded thee of the Lord."

Following this explanatory review, Peter opened his mouth and gave unhesitating utterance to the large and gracious thought into which he had been led. "Of

a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him."

A little while ago he was saying: "Not so, Lord." Nothing common or unclean must pass his lips. He could share in no intimacy of association, and no free and fraternal mingling with pagans. Now he was avowing it as a fresh "perception" or discovery, and by implication a fact to be recognized in all intercourse with all races and in all labors for the salvation of souls, and the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, that God has an open heart and an open hand for the people of all nations, and that no man, speaking in the name of the Father and of the Son and under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, may venture to call any other man common or unclean.

Having started with the statement of what he had come to "perceive" concerning the impartial love of the common Father for the people of all nations, the Apostle went on to preach Jesus to the centurion and his assembled friends as the One who was anointed of God with the Holy Spirit; who was clothed with miraculous powers and filled with tenderest compassion; who was slain and hanged on a tree, but was chosen to be His witnesses; who charged His followers to announce Him to the world as the appointed Judge of all, and as the foretold Saviour through whose name every one that believeth may receive remission of sins. Even while he was speaking the Holy Spirit fell on the whole listening group. The truth was carried home to the hearts of Cornelius and his

friends. They were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. A new stage was reached in the development of Christianity.

Passing now from the details of the narrative, and looking at the story of the conversion of Cornelius in some of its wider and more general aspects, we are impressed by two facts.

The first has to do with the converging lines along which God in this instance worked for the accomplishment of the divine purpose.

In the economy of spiritual progress the time had come for the exponents of religious truth to take a step forward and announce the equal offer of the privileges of the Gospel and the equal application of the principles of the Gospel to all classes and conditions of the human race. To bring this consummation about in a way to make it a great standing object-lesson through all the subsequent centuries, required two men, as we can see now, like Cornelius and Peter; or two men who sustained exactly the relations these two did, the one to the pagan and the other to the religious world. These two men were taken. Through a two-fold process, or a process in which two factors were made to work toward a common result,— a method of operation so easy to the divine mind, the end aimed at was secured. At the time he was passing through his strange experience with the angel of God, Cornelius did not know for what purpose he was receiving this peculiar training. At the time he was passing through his strange experience with the vision, Peter did not know what new duty God was to lay upon him, nor how the discharge of this duty was to be utilized.

for the widening of his own spiritual apprehension and putting an augmented power of appeal into the Gospel. So far as appears, neither knew of the other. But in their experience God fitted them each to each, like lock to key or cog to mesh. When the moment was ripe, He brought them together to render an indispensable service to the Christian faith.

This seems to be a method of securing results to which God is partial. If we go back into the Old Testament we find an impressive example of this co-working of agencies and movements in providence for the accomplishment of divine ends in the familiar instance of Joseph. The story of Joseph is interesting and instructive from any point of view—even the narrowest. It becomes a mighty story, and Joseph becomes a mighty figure, when the outworking of his life, and the whole complex relationship in which he stood to ideas and events, are looked upon as a vast drama in which all the parts are assigned, and all the personages speak and act, though unconsciously, with reference to the purposes of God. The problem was how to get a single patriarchal line developed into a great nation, loyal enough to God to accept His sovereignty, and to be the organ of His communications to humanity.

The whole vast scheme revolved about Joseph; but it required innumerable adjustments of men and measures and incidents and events, some of which are readily traceable, but many of which are too subtle and remote for detection, to make sure of the issue sought. Providences were made to match each other. Bad men were overruled in their schemes. Wicked plots

were rendered abortive. Drouths and hunger played their part in the plan. Innumerable influences were brought into convergence on this one man that there might at some future day be a great Hebrew commonwealth with laws and institutions and religion ordained of God. The persons concerned in these movements did not know what end they were subserving. Joseph did not know for what God had chosen him, and how far he was to stretch his hand down through the years. But God brought it about by suiting agent to agent and influence to influence in a fine co-working.

In the instance before us of Cornelius and Peter this working of God along converging lines has perfect illustration. It is all thrown into a narrow compass, concentrated into a brief period, and done almost as if under our own eyes. Each was taken in hand; and the one was put into a mood to receive precisely what the other was put into a mood to impart. It was all arranged, too, in the divine plan so that there could be no mistake about it. The Centurion was not going to send for Peter, and then not find him, or not find him ready. Peter was not going up to Caesarea to declare a large and precious truth to the Centurion and find him in no state to comprehend it. It was vision dovetailing into vision. It was vision and vision moving along on converging lines toward a glad and glorious result.

It is a joy to think God works in this way still and evermore—fitting hearts for truth and truth for hearts, so that in due time and in His own divine way the two come together in reciprocal adaptation, and show what a heart can be when purified and set aglow with the

truth. When a man finds himself put under any special tuition or discipline—wrought upon in some unwonted degree by the Spirit—he may be sure that God has some special task for him to perform, or some special word for him to speak. So, too, when a man feels in his soul a great hunger for something higher and better than he has yet found, for some truth of which he has only vague apprehension, he may be sure there is somebody somewhere trained to help him. In the depths of Africa, in slow-moving China, in caste-burdened India, there are at this moment minds and hearts undergoing preparation for the blessed truths, which young men and women in the colleges and seminaries of America are being prepared to carry to them. It is vision answering to vision—plan fitting into plan.

The second larger fact which impresses us is the equal access which God affords to all classes and conditions of men to come to Him through Christ. This is the central and sublime lesson of the story of Cornelius and Peter. Made in God's image, atoned for by the death on the cross, ministered to by the Holy Spirit, holding in him capabilities of immortal blessedness in the presence of the Father and in the fellowship of the heavenly hosts, let no man be called common. Ecclesiastical prejudices, race prejudices, caste prejudices; pride of intellect and culture; assumptions of superior civilization—they all go down when smitten by the voice which spoke to Peter in the vision and which has been filling the world with the cheer of its echoes ever since: "What God hath cleansed, make not thou common."

How grandly Peter rose to this conception. Not easily, not all at once; rather with slow and reluctant feet he started in to climb this height; but he reached the top at length, and stood there glad and triumphant. "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him."

This does not mean that all religions are of equal value, and that what is peculiar to Christianity is of no consequence in the saving of a soul. Had this been what the Apostle meant, or had this been true, then Cornelius might have been left to go his own way, and to trust without question in the devoutness and reverence and alms-giving and prayers which were characteristics of his life.

The simple fact is that the whole story turns on the conversion of Cornelius to the faith of Christ, and his direct and immediate admission, so soon as the Holy Spirit had fallen upon him and sent the truth home to his heart, into the living and visible Church of Our Lord. There was no preparatory ceremony, no intervening ceremony; the man came straight from his paganism into Christianity. He came because notwithstanding all his excellencies, he needed to come. As he came, so all may come. Access to God is open and free to all men. No pope, no priest, no tradition, no ritual, no social distinction, no color, no condition, may be thrown between God and a human soul, but each may come in his own person and just as he is.

This, on its human side, is the large and characteristic fact of the Gospel. Peter was the forerunner of Paul, and in this service rendered by him to the cen-

urion he opened wide the door to the Gentiles. Cornelius as he stood there in the presence of the Apostle was the representative of all the millions who were then living, or who were ever to live, outside the pale of the Jewish Fellowship. God chose him to be the hinge on which the new order of things should turn. The question—then a great and burning question—whether converts to Christianity should be baptized and admitted directly into the Christian Church, or should be compelled first to submit to Jewish rites, was to be settled for all time. It was settled, and to the glory of God and the good of mankind it was settled right. The church is not yet in all respects up to it, but the sublime truth remains and will remain forever that God is no respecter of persons, and that while all need to come to Him, all may come to Him and have a share in the peace and glory of the everlasting inheritance.

THE MALEFACTOR ON THE CROSS.

"And there were also two others, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death. And when they came unto the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left."—Luke 23:32-33.

"And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, Art not Thou the Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answered, and rebuking him said: Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom. And He said unto him: Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."—Luke 23:39-43.

XIII.

THE MALEFACTOR ON THE CROSS.

Attempts have been made by students who have given careful attention to the closing scenes in the life of Jesus to show that the person who was crucified with our Lord, and has passed into history as the penitent thief, was not a sinner of the vicious and criminal type ordinarily supposed, but rather a mere political offender who was arrested and brought to trial and condemned to death because of participation in some conspiracy against the state. Instead of being a bad man, he may have been even a good man and suffered the extreme penalty of the law for reasons no more to his discredit than were those which led to the execution of Sir Thoman More under Henry the Eighth, or the treacherous beheading of Vane by Charles the Second, or the hanging of John Brown by Governor Wise in Virginia for the part he took in trying to incite concerted revolt and uprising among the slaves.

It is not claimed that this malefactor was a man of such eminent ability and high character as the distinguished martyrs just named, but that his crime was political rather than moral. He had been concerned in efforts to overturn the existing order of things in the state, and in place of the injustice and tyranny of

the Roman rule to substitute a better government. If this conjecture has basis in fact then the man was patriot, and not a mere vulgar violator of law. He may have adopted crude means of accomplishing his ends, and property may have been appropriated and harm done to individuals in the carrying out of his plans; but on this theory he was not by original intention or habit a man whose set purpose it was to molest people and prey on the community and despoil honest folk of their possessions and make his living by the practices of the highwayman.

In support of this view a number of very plausible considerations are brought forward.

It is said that the word which in the Old Version in both Matthew and Mark is rendered "thief," and in the New Version in both Matthew and Mark is rendered "robber," but which in Luke has another word put in its place which in Old and New Version alike is translated "malefactor," or evil-worker, does not hold in it the idea of stealing or robbery so much as violence. This thief or robber or malefactor may have been one of the leaders in a band of agitators who were doing everything possible to thwart the public officials in their oppression. This man was a Jew, else he would not have been crucified. Everybody knows how the Jews fretted under the Roman yoke, and how they would have thrown off the Roman supremacy had they only been strong enough.

What is known of Barabbas is said to lend confirmation to this view of the character of the malefactor. Barabbas, though called a "robber," was not a robber

the common thought of the term. The crime which was charged against him, and for which he came so near losing his life, was sedition. He had directed, or had had share in, an insurrection. In the encounter which followed blood was shed, and for this, which was primarily a political offence, he was condemned to die. Setting out to overturn things, and suffering defeat, he would naturally become desperate, and in his distress and poverty he might resort to all sorts of wickedness to be avenged on society. But whether this be so or not, the original aim of the man, so it is affirmed, was revolution, and his offence was, in the inception and purpose of it, political.

Then there is the further assumption that Barabbas and this malefactor belonged to the same circle of offenders. It is evident that Barabbas was for some reason popular with the crowd. When the opportunity was given to secure his release, the multitude would not stop shouting for him till he had been brought forth and set free. No doubt he was a leader among the set who held his opinions and who were in sympathy with him in his methods. What can be easier than first imagining and then inferring that all thieves and robbers and malefactors of the time must have been of his way of thinking and under his lead? If so, this particular malefactor must have been of the number and in these ranks. In this case both he and they are to be thought of, not as mere ordinary criminals, but as political offenders. With this admitted, much that has been said of the evil-worker who was crucified with Christ falls to the ground.

It is needless to say that these speculations do not commend themselves to what would seem to be the plain common sense of the situation.

Putting no stress on details, but leaving all incidents to speak for themselves, the natural impression made by the story is that these two persons who were called "malefactors" were bad men. Indeed, we can see now that bad men, if any men at all were to be hung on the cross with Jesus, were exactly the kind of men who would be chosen for this death. Whether designed, or even so much as imagined, by the authorities, it was in the divine plan that our Lord should be a Suffering Saviour. He was to know the extremes of humiliation. The birth of the Son of God into our humanity was a humiliation. To be placed in the manger while yet an infant of hours was a humiliation. To come to His own in the fulness of His Messianic mission and not be received by His own was a humiliation. To be treated as He was by the world through the larger part of His career, though there were occasions when "the common people heard Him gladly," was a humiliation. His betrayal and trial were a humiliation. To make the end as humiliating as possible, not only was Jesus crucified, but victims as low down in the estimation of the authorities and of those who were supporting the authorities as could be found were associated with Him in what was meant to be the signal and crowning disgrace of His name. This is the inference which the story yields; and the inference is in line with what was to be expected. Both in the eternal intent and in the purpose of the "lawless

men" by whose hands He was slain, the death of Jesus was to be made ignominious. Not popular heroes, but men deserving of punishment and contempt, would be chosen, we may be sure, to hang there on the tree with Him who bore our sins in His own body and expiate their crimes with their lives.

But in addition to these considerations there is the distinct and open confession of ill-desert. One of the malefactors, joining in with the jeering crowd, railed on Jesus, and in a tone, not of faith and sincerity, but of distrust and mockery, besought Him to save both Himself and them. The other malefactor straightway rebuked him—if not for his heartlessness, yet for his irreverence and reckless audacity. “Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” Having asked this question, and uttered the rebuke implied in it, and done his best to bring the man to his senses, he proceeded at once to identify himself with his associate in condemnation by adding: “And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” Here is the whole case in a word—“justly.” He and the other malefactor were suffering “justly.” They were receiving “the due reward of their deeds.” These two men were not mere political offenders, proud of what they had done to relieve the people of the burden of tyranny with which they were oppressed and glad to sacrifice their lives in so righteous a cause, but they were criminals of the criminal order. “We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.” This is the frank admission; and this admission holds in it the key to all

that is most significant in the unique story of the wonderful pardon which was sought and obtained on the cross.

Turning now to a more specific study of the malefactor whose case is before us for consideration, it is to be said that he was a sinner and a sinner of an aggravated type. He was fully conscious of his sins. He was near to death. It was a question of only a little time when the pulse would cease its beating and the spirit would leave its earthly tenement. Something must be done, and done at once, if the harsh penalties he was suffering on the cross and through which he was passing into the experiences of the world to come were not to be the foretokenings of still harsher penalties when at the august and unerring tribunal of the Almighty he should receive the just award for deeds done in the body.

A conscious sinner, near to the hour of his dissolution, and close to the judgment from which there could be no appeal, what was the wise course for this man to pursue? What resource was open to him? How kindle a star in the sky of his black night? How change his wail of despair into a song of hope? How transform his woeful defeat into a victory and make his submission to death a triumphant march to life? With the awful flood already upon him, was there any ark whose doors he would not find sealed again his entrance? In all the universe was there any heart to pity him; any ear to hear his cry; any hand to stretch out to his help? It could hardly be thought strange had this dying malefactor felt that all was lost.

But the condition of a man is not utterly hopeless who still has left in him some appreciation of goodness. A man may be far away from virtue; but if he believes in virtue, and especially if he has some honest desire for virtue, his recovery is possible. This is one of the radical distinctions between these two malefactors—the other was coarse and hard and bitter, and quite ready, though so near to the end of his bad career, to join in with the howling mob in scoffing at Jesus; while the one whom we are now considering, in spite of his own unworthiness and guilt which he was free to acknowledge, saw and felt the purity of Him who was the central Figure on the cross and was prompt to do him justice. "We receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." There was nothing in His record and nothing in His character to warrant the treatment He was receiving. "Nothing amiss" had been said or done by Him. This was the frank testimony of the suffering criminal.

It is evident, however, that the malefactor was prepared to go further and accord to Jesus a part at least of what was claimed by Him and for Him. He was profoundly impressed by the bearing of Jesus, and somehow he could not help believing—at first vaguely, it may be, and then more clearly and positively—that He was a divine Person with a divine mission to the world. Out of this conviction came the prayer which opened the way to his salvation. "And he said: Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom."

Here was the recognition of Jesus in the precise

character ascribed to Him in the writing on the cross. He saw in Jesus the long expected Messiah, and the King of a kingdom which was to be set up on the earth. He did not take in the full measure of Jesus, which is not strange; but he apprehended Him as One who had been sent of God to be the helper of men in their moral and spiritual needs and to institute a new order of things in society. No doubt he had seen Jesus before. It is not unlikely that he had heard His words, and had had conversation with others about Him. If so, there may have been a predisposition in his heart to accept Jesus and fall into the ranks of His disciples. This would take from the conversion the suddenness which the narrative seems to suggest. Still, whether there be anything in this conjecture or not, here was the recognition of Jesus in His office of divine helper and with power to do for souls in distress and under condemnation what no earthly friend and no earthly sovereign could do for them. What he saw and what he heard convinced him that Jesus was not a mere man, and he turned to Him in his hour of extremity.

Look, now, for a moment, at the prayer which this malefactor offered: "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom."

His associate in crime and misfortune railed on Jesus and tauntingly asked if He was not the Christ. If He was the Christ, then He was to demonstrate it by saving both Himself and them. His request was an echo of the cruel demand made by the heartless rulers and the mocking soldiers as they gazed on Him and insulted Him after He had been suspended on the

cross. There was no thought in his mind of deliverance from sin, and apparently no sense of sin on his conscience. All he wanted was deliverance from present trouble. If he could only be taken down from the tree to which he had been nailed, and have his life spared to him, it would be enough. He was a hardened felon, with no contrition in his heart and no desire for forgiveness.

The prayer of the penitent malefactor reveals a radically different state of mind and heart, and is intent on an entirely different object. He did not ask Jesus to give proof of His divinity by rescuing him from his present straits and restoring him to liberty and life. This thought seems not to have been before him. On the contrary, he accepted death as inevitable and saw it close at hand. But he had a yearning for something better. Brooded over by the Spirit and helped to right conclusions by the sanctification of his sufferings to the good of his soul, he opened his eyes out on the future and sought recognition and a place in the kingdom which he was more and more persuaded Jesus had come to establish. He did not ask for a chance to try his hard life over again; but from the shame and pain and bitterness of the past he turned with intense longing to a career of intimate fellowship with Jesus. He would suffer on through the hours of excruciating agony until the end came, but when all was over he wanted admission into the kingdom of Our Lord. "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." If he could only be received into the kingdom and have an assured place there, it would satisfy him.

It was a strange prayer—wonderful alike in the man who uttered it, in the circumstances in which it found voice, and in the burden it bore. It can be accounted for only on the grounds already suggested—that the man 'down beneath his bad record had a heart that was still tender and susceptible to worthy appeals, and that he was under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were losing faith as they saw disaster overtaking their cherished hopes; but in the midst of what to believers appeared to be an overwhelming calamity, this malefactor was coming into the faith which was to save his soul and make his words not only memorable but instructive and comforting to all the ages.

It was a brief prayer; but it was long enough. For just that one sentence of supplication with what had gone before it took up into itself and carried along with it a frank confession of sin and guilt, an explicit and hearty acknowledgment of belief in Jesus, and an unqualified assurance that He to whom he was addressing his entreaty was both able and willing to do what he sought to have Him do. It was no time for much speaking and elaborate appeals. The poor man was in pain of body and under stress of heart. The stress of heart was his chiefest concern. He had been a criminal and an outcast among men, but he did not want to be a criminal and an outcast forever. He wanted to come into new associations, and to be a citizen of a new and better city. He wanted to come into the fellowship of Jesus and be one of His subjects. "Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom."

But if the prayer of the malefactor was surprising

for the penitence, courage, faith and hope which it implied, as well as touching in its pathos, what shall be said of the answer made to it by our Lord? When all the circumstances are considered must it not be held to be one of the most wonderful answers which ever fell on the ear of man in response to his supplication for help?

In a prayer of His own Jesus had already said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." This was the first of what has been called the "Seven Words" of Jesus on the cross. In the thought of Jesus this prayer, no doubt, embraced all who had had any share in His crucifixion. Grand in its simplicity, divine in its compassionate tenderness, this petition has touched the heart of the world as few other petitions ever have and made men feel how real and ample is the forgiveness of God.

Having heard that prayer what more natural than for the malefactor to think it afforded a ground of hope for him? Having offered that prayer how could it be in the heart of our Lord not to grant the request submitted to Him by the penitent criminal at His side?

Yet how far the answer went beyond what could have been even the most sanguine expectations of this dying convict. "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He did not promise to assist him in getting down from the cross. He did not come to the relief of his agony. He did not tell him he should not die. He leaped far ahead of all this and assured the suppliant that before the day ended he was to come into the joy and glory of personal relationship with Him in Paradise. What

imagination is vivid enough to picture to itself all that this answer must have meant to the suffering malefactor. "To-day." "Paradise." "With Me." These were the assurances. No longer, we may be certain, was there any bitterness in this man's thought of death. The past had been bad—wretchedly bad; but the sentence of condemnation had been canceled. He was a malefactor, but he was a pardoned malefactor. He was near to the end of his earthly career, but he was close to the beginning of a glad and triumphant career somewhere with this wonderful Personage who like himself was then nailed to the cross. To others it might mean much or little, but to him the "verily" of Jesus was the certification of every word of promise which fell from His lips. That very day he was to be with Him in Paradise.

What is meant by this? Exactly what idea did our Lord intend to convey in the use of this language? Perhaps it is not possible to answer this question with positiveness or in detail. The word "Paradise" is used three times in the New Testament. It is used here in this prayer; by Paul in his account of being caught up into regions where he heard unspeakable words, and by John in Revelation. In the current Jewish belief "Paradise," no doubt, like the figure of "Abraham's bosom," was a synonym for the blessedness of the righteous. As it has fallen to me to say elsewhere and in another connection, it is the same as if Jesus had said: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in the blessedness of the righteous." Had He said "Heaven," or "Abraham's bosom," or "With Me in the blessedness of the righteous," the thought which

the words would have carried to the mind of the malefactor, and the popular apprehension of their meaning, would have been substantially what it was when He said "Paradise." Jesus meant to tell this sharer with Him in the agonies of the crucifixion, whose heart had been softened by what he saw, and who had come into a sharp and sincere sorrow for his sins, that his penitence and his faith opened for him an immediate entrance into the joy of the kingdom. His faith was an overcoming faith, and he was to be permitted, through the infinite riches of the grace of God in Christ who was there on the cross making expiation for the sins of the world, to partake of the fruit of "the tree of life which was in the midst of the Paradise of God." He was not to be kept back. He was not to be detained for an indefinite period in some outer court. The door was swung wide and he was to enter at once. He was to be "with Christ" as Paul felt that he was to be with Christ on his departure; and he was to have the "gain" which Paul expected to have on dying. This was "Paradise."

This, then, is the answer made by our Lord to the prayer of the malefactor who was dying at His side on the cross. In a single sentence of reply, the awful burden of sin and future consequences was lifted from his soul, and a blessing, far transcending all his expectations and soon to be bestowed, was assured to him. By agents acting under the authority and power of the Roman Empire the malefactor was consigned to a cruel and ignominious death; but he was delivered from a worse fate and exalted into near and everlasting blessedness by One who, though Himself on the

cross, was yet mightier than all the Cæsars. In all the universe there was but one Saviour with resources of salvation adequate to his needs; but that Saviour was close at hand, and he had simply to show the right disposition and utter his cry, to secure the pardoning grace of God in Christ. In the midst of death he found life—even the eternal life of the Son of God.

The story of this conversion of the malefactor on the cross yields us two important lessons.

The first is that at the last moment of an earthly life salvation is still possible.

It is not probable that one who has filled up his years with indifference to the claims of God on his soul, or who has passed his days in pronounced opposition to the divine will and in flagrant sinning, will suddenly change his whole temper and attitude when the pulse is about to cease its beating and ask the Lord to forgive and make him an heir to the heavenly inheritance, but it is possible.

That conversion at the last moment is not probable is made abundantly evident by the facts of experience and observation. Most men die as they have lived. There is a tendency in human nature to fixedness in opinion and character, and under this tendency men who start wrong are quite likely to continue wrong and to end wrong. Left to their own inclinations and ways bad men do not grow better but worse as time goes on. The conscience which was once sensitive becomes less and less responsive to higher appeals. The heart which was once tender with the emotions and impulses of childhood grows harder and harder. Moral standards go down. Lofty ideals cease to

lominate the soul. The disposition to yield to God and to walk in an intimate and personal fellowship with Him grows weaker and weaker. More than half of all the conversions in our evangelical churches take place before the age of twenty. The old men are not few who in youth felt a deep solicitude for their own spiritual welfare, but who now have lost all interest in religious things, and are simply drifting on to whatever their destiny may be. Death-beds are not safe points to fix upon for turning unto the Lord. No man knows when nor where nor how the end may come to him.

Even were conversion at the last moment probable it would not be wise to put off accepting the Lord to that late stage. By so doing one loses the joy and inspiration of walking with God day by day through all the round of life. One loses the disposition and opportunity to be helpful in the highest degree. One loses, too, the development in righteous character, or growth in likeness to Jesus Christ, which we are bound to believe gives the soul best fitness for the high service and fellowship of heaven. No man can afford, if he has regard to highest happiness, or to usefulness, or to the suppression of the worst and the unfolding of the best elements of his nature, to live a single hour without God. To be without God is to walk in darkness. To be without God is to be orphaned.

But it is still true that conversion is possible at the last moment. On dying couches, in mid-air between the window from which the workman fell and the sidewalk where life is to become suddenly extinct, along the short path which leads from cell to scaffold,

the ear of God may be reached and salvation secured. This is our God. So ready is He to forgive. So abundant is His pardon. Let there be but the faintest confession of guilt; let there be but the feeblest cry for mercy; let there be but the vaguest longing for better life, and the pierced hand of the Crucified One is extended and the great heart of the Father opened, and confession and cry and longing are met with instant recognition. The malefactor was dying, but as the currents of the old bad life were ebbing, the currents of a new and higher life began to swell in his soul, and he went hence, pardoned, redeemed, an heir of heaven.

The second lesson which this story of the conversion of the malefactor on the cross yields is that criminals have a place in the affectionate regard of Jesus, and that even the worst offenders against their fellow-men and society may be saved by His grace.

It is not vice alone and self-degradation to which the love of God is equal, but crime of every description. This malefactor was saved; the other might have been had he wished to be. The death of the Son of God on Calvary made ample atonement for a world lying in wickedness; and where all are out of the way it is of small consequence, so far as redeeming grace is concerned, whether one be a little more or a little less audacious in his wrong-doing. It is often hard for us to forgive. It is not hard for God to forgive. It belongs to His divine nature, and with equal facility He can take those whom we call great sinners as well as those whom we call little sinners into His loving embrace.

It is one of the hopeful signs of the times that Christian people are taking a deeper and more intelligent interest than ever before in the welfare of the criminal classes. The efforts of Howard more than a century ago to secure prison reform were in exact line with the spirit of the treatment accorded by our Lord to the penitent malefactor. Elizabeth Gurney Fry was following on in the same path, and in her human measure was illustrating the same divine compassion which was exhibited on the cross, when she visited the inmates of the woman's apartment at the Newgate and read the Scriptures to that wretched and repulsive mass of humanity. Now we have specialists in large numbers, and associations in all Christian lands, who make it their chief concern to look after the interests of the imprisoned and do all in their power to bring about their restoration to honest living and good citizenship. Nobody who was in attendance on Mr. Moody's meetings in the closing years of his life will ever forget how tender he was and at the same time how tremendously in earnest in his appeal for contributions to aid the occupants of our jails and penitentiaries. There is a difference of opinion as to the true object of punishment and the best method of inflicting punishment; but convicts are no longer regarded as beings outside of the pale of human sympathy and impossible to be saved. Everywhere in enlightened and Christian communities there is a quickened sense of obligation to help criminals and make them feel that if they are disposed to reform and live worthier lives, society, or the better part of society, will meet them more than half way.

Here as in other spheres an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It is wiser and better to stamp men from becoming criminals than it is to try to reform them after they have gone wrong. This is the true economy and the true philanthropy; to watch life at the start and hold it in right channels. Nothing but the grace of God will keep men with strong vicious and lawless tendencies in them in the right way; but if education, secular and religious, can be imparted if the forces of a bad heredity can be overcome or held in check; if healthful and morally stimulating environment can be supplied; if encouragement to virtuous living can be given and fair chances for getting on in the world, there will be fewer recruits to the bad elements of society. It is not so much by plucking brands from the burning as it is by keeping the fresh fuel from getting on fire that society is to be saved and the kingdom of righteousness set up in the world.

But for all this it is still true that in Jesus Christ there is the possibility of salvation for sinners the most hardened and desperate. Men who mock at the suggestion that thieves and murderers may turn to God and find forgiveness mock at him who said to the penitent malefactor on the cross that before the rising of another sun he was to be with Him in Paradise. Men may not be sincere in their avowals of sorrow for sin and in their confessions of faith in the Son of God; this is the fact, no doubt, with regard to many who seem to be penitent. Men may deceive themselves and fancy they have turned to Jesus, when in truth they have not; all this is quite possible. Yet after everything has been granted that even the

most skeptical or exacting can claim, the attitude of our Saviour toward the dying malefactor abides forever. Bad and wicked as any man may have been in his life Jesus will save him if he will consent to be saved.

At the last moment, then, and at the end of a career which may have been high-handed and appalling in its wickedness, there is still hope for one who is sorry for his sins and wants to come into the fellowship of God. There is no limit to the assurance: "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God for He will abundantly pardon." There are no ifs and ands, save those which men conjure up in their own hearts, attached to the invitation: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is "whosoever," be the whosoever who he may; and it is "now," be the now when it may. This is what Jesus taught, and it is what He illuminated on the cross when He said to the penitent malefactors in words that are immortal: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

NICODEMUS.

*"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily,
I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he can-
not see the Kingdom of God."*—John 3:3.

XIV.

NICODEMUS.

Nicodemus had qualities which challenge our respect and make it impossible not to hold him in a certain measure of esteem. There will be occasion later on to speak farther of his merits, but it is quite in order to say now that he was an intelligent man and knew how to ask questions which penetrated to the heart of real difficulties. He had a genuine love for truth and evidently desired to possess an assured knowledge of the truth that saves. He was frank and candid; and, while at the outset he was not ready to go the whole length in accepting His teachings and admitting His claims, he was prepared to ascribe high rank and honor to Jesus. So far as appears, his life was strictly moral and his reputation unblemished. It requires no skill in the analysis of character to see that he was an exceedingly careful man.

Two facts make this latter statement clear. The first in his coming to Jesus by night, and the second is the kind of inquiries he submitted and the persistency with which he pressed his points. He was sincere and wanted all that this "Teacher come from God" had for him; but he thought it better that his approaches to Him should be quiet and unobserved. In his search even for light he saw no need of provoking adverse criticism or running the risk of losing the good opinion of his associates in authority. Ac-

cording to his judgment and habit of mind, it was the part of wisdom to take truths and duties—or what were claimed to be truths and duties—announced to him and turn them over and over and look at them on all sides. The signs which Jesus did convinced this inquirer that God was with Him in a peculiar sense still from Him he was not satisfied to receive statements without carefully scrutinizing them.

But in this Nicodemus was not altogether at fault. Caution is good. Great battles have been lost because generals did not exercise more forethought in guarding against contingencies. Ships with valuable cargoes and many precious lives on board have dashed against rock-bound coasts or gone to the bottom in mid-ocean, because captains were not more watchful of compass and chart or more on the alert when storms threatened destruction. Business ventures which looked promising on the surface have turned out disastrously because actual conditions and chances of success were not investigated more thoroughly. It is a foul slander on human nature to suppose that men and women of average ability and good standing would fall in with all the shallow fads of the hour and become the ready dupes of every charletan who appears were they to stop long enough to test the schemes presented by the application to them of a little hard, searching common sense.

The Ithuriel spear has its functions, and people who do not wish to be deceived are justified in using it to uncover frauds and pretensions. It is well to look into titles before buying properties, and purchasers who are intent on securing valuable real estate, and

ot deeds to lands already mortgaged beyond their worth, or to city lots located in remote marshes, better not be too sparing in their visits to recorders' offices. When streams are turbulent and chasms deep, it is much better to be satisfied that all supports and timbers are safe before attempting to cross bridges. The soul is the supreme interest. No man who has proper regard for his own welfare will accept any faith, though it be of the soundest, without first examining the grounds which justify acceptance. It is as much a right and duty to inquire into Christianity as it is to review and weigh the affirmations of Buddhism, or the doctrines of the Koran, or the claims of modern Rationalism.

Nicodemus was doing only what he owed it to his own reason and conscience to do when he exercised caution. The trouble with him was not that he was cautious, but that he was over-cautious. He was cautious to the extreme of timidity. It would hardly do to call such a man a coward. Still the prudential instinct in him was so strong, and he had such a marked regard for what ecclesiastical officials and others in influential positions might think, that a bold suggestion would most likely have startled him and filled his heart with alarm. He belonged to the class of men of which Gamaliel was the most conspicuous type rather than to the ranks of those who had the open boldness of Peter and Paul. Had he been a reformer he would have been an Erasmus and not a Luther. Had he been an American colonist he would have been a hesitating patriot if not a mild tory, rather

than a pronounced rebel. He had in him none of the stuff of which resolute explorers and hardy pioneers are made.

But though Nicodemus was timid and thought it prudent to make his approaches with soft step and under cover of darkness, he yet found his way into the presence of Jesus. It would have been better and more manly, so it seems, for him to come in broad daylight and with the fearless front with which Socrates would have sought Him; but it was better for him to come as he did than not to have come at all. Though he had not definitely formulated it in his own mind, it may be, he carried a problem to Jesus, and when he left Him his problem was solved—was solved for him and for all who should come after him.

What was the problem which was filling the thoughts of Nicodemus and burdening his heart? At bottom it was nothing other than the same old one which has been confronting serious souls through the ages. It was how a man may be right with God and have share in the fellowship and joy of the Kingdom of God. He did not put the matter in just this way. Indeed he did not put it in any way. He asked no questions. He failed to get far enough along to express his wish in definite shape. As the Prodigal was interrupted by the Father and not allowed to finish his premeditated speech, so before it could be stated in words, Jesus caught the request which was trembling on the lips of this Ruler of the Jews and told him what he was vaguely feeling after and what above all things else he most needed to know. He

did not linger and let Nicodemus reach the subject in which he was searching for light by the circumspect and definite method of the trained scholar, but anticipating the point of his inquiry he made a short cut to the answer and declared to him that he must be born anew, or born from above. There must be a new birth—a spiritual birth—if a man would be on right terms with God and secure in his membership in the Kingdom of God. Only so can a man see the Kingdom of God. On the very threshold of the interview, and long before he could have supposed he was to be brought by Jesus into such close grip with his own deeds, this is what fell on the ear of our prudent Pharisee.

Two facts here arrest attention. One is the character and standing of the man to whom these words were spoken. The other is the nature and mission of the Person who spoke these words. It was Nicodemus and Jesus face to face; and it is because it was Nicodemus and Jesus that what passed between them has measureless significance.

As has been said already, Nicodemus was a man of intelligence, of marked sincerity and candor, of distinguished prudence, of uprightness of life, of established position, and with a real desire for more light, if more light might be obtained, on the great questions of God and the Soul. He was not a man to stake all for a cause, and he was apparently incapable of a lofty enthusiasm; but he was a man of self-respect and dignity. He was a man to be trusted, a man whose motives would not be likely to be called into debate, and a man against whom no tongue of slander

would ever wag successfully. He possessed such rare combination of qualities that, were he now living any community would be glad to count him among its most reputable citizens. Yet it was upon this man that Jesus pressed the necessity of a new birth. "Except a man be born anew" or born "from above" "he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Nor was it enough for Him to say it once, He repeated it: "Ye must be born anew."

Had Jesus said this to Zacchaeus, to the woman at the well, to the malefactor on the Cross, or to any one far astray from virtue, it would not have been surprising. Few are so stupid or so perverse in judgment as not to see that what such persons need is not reform merely, but a complete renovation of the moral and spiritual nature. It is not change in outward conduct alone or mainly that is required, but it is a new creation. The waters must be sweetened at the fountain. The life must come under the influence of new motives. All the currents of one's being must be reversed and set toward God. Only so can men who are leprous with sin ever be cleansed and restored to soundness. Only so can the victims of greed and lust and crime and low, debasing habits ever be made the children of light.

It was not, however, to Zacchaeus, to the woman at the well, to the malefactor on the Cross, nor to any hard and abandoned character that Jesus spoke these words, but to Nicodemus. It was upon Nicodemus that Jesus pressed the necessity of the new birth. It was to this man with his clean record, with his cultivation and respectability, and with a name so fair

removed from what is dishonest and gross that no man would have thought of associating any moral delinquency with it, that Jesus declared regeneration to be indispensable. He was already a religious man, and he had the confidence of the religious men of his time; but this did not exempt him from the need of being born anew if he would see the Kingdom of God.

At first the mystery involved in this statement seemed chiefly to occupy the mind of Nicodemus, and he wanted this mystery explained. Jesus readily yielded to the ruler's request.

But in the explanation He made, as in the original statement, our Lord held Nicodemus steadily to the point of the necessity of the new birth. Not for one moment was he permitted to escape the thought of this necessity. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." "Ye must be born anew." It was like a repeating rifle, with shot after shot in quick succession, and each bullet going straight to the mark.

But if it is a fact of profoundest import that words like these were spoken to such a man as Nicodemus, it is also a fact whose meaning can in nowise be overestimated that these words fell from the lips of Jesus Christ. If there was ever a person here on earth who knew God better than anybody else knew Him, or who knew men and their needs better than anybody else knew them, that person was our divine Lord.

Jesus was a prophet; but he was more than a prophet. Jesus was a great ethical teacher; but he was more than a great ethical teacher. Jesus was a philanthropist; but he was a philanthropist of a divine

order. He was the manifestation of the Father. In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He was the light of the world. He spoke with authority. In His words the eternal thought had voice. In what He was and in what He did infinite love found expression. Had it been Plato or Aurelius who uttered these words which were addressed to Nicodemus, men out of the way in sin might surely have deemed them worthy of the most serious consideration. Had it been Moses or Paul who stood behind this language sober minded people would have felt that it was entitled to great weight. But it was not one of these who said what is here recorded—it was Jesus. It was Jesus the Son of God. It was Jesus who was here in the world for the express purpose of helping men into the Kingdom of God. It was Jesus who above all others knew both God and man, and the terms on which man can be reconciled to God and made secure in righteousness. It was Jesus who in His interview with this ruler of the Jews was discoursing on the very theme which was the burden of His soul and the heart and aim of His mission.

Speaking thus from the standpoint of His own divine knowledge and personality and in the direct line of the specific purpose of the incarnation, Jesus affirmed that if men would see the Kingdom of God they must be born anew. Be the views of others on the question of personal salvation what they may, and be the authority with which they speak what it may, Jesus insisted on the necessity of a new birth. If His word is to be accepted as divine, and if His statements are to be counted the highest and final authority

on all matters pertaining to the relations of the soul to God, then there is no escape from the condition of salvation which He lays down, and men who would be the subjects of the Kingdom and heirs of the everlasting inheritance must yield to the influences of the Spirit and come under the power of the endless life. Whatever the philosophers may maintain; whatever the poets may sing; whatever the scientists may announce; whatever the reformers may advocate, and whatever we may be led to hope for mankind from such aspirations and laws of progress as may be inherent in human nature, Jesus, like a physician who consults the pulse or takes the temperature of his patient, laid His finger on the individual heart and said: "This is where the trouble lies; this is the source of the disloyalty and sin; and nothing short of the heart renewed by the grace of God will put a man at one with God."

If this be true once more, and the words of the Great Teacher are to be regarded as authoritative and final, then eminent respectability is not enough to save the soul, and vast stores of knowledge are not enough, and the graces and accomplishments which come from rare culture are not enough, and fine temperament and artistic tastes are not enough—there must be what our Lord called the birth from above, or that submission of the human will to the divine will which is the equivalent of a new moral and spiritual creation. The gospel is a gospel for the poor; but it is also a gospel for the rich; and the rich need it as much as the poor. It is a gospel for the unlearned and ignorant; but it is also a gospel for the schools. It is a

gospel for the slums; but it is also a gospel for the avenues and boulevards. It is a gospel for all men alike, because all men alike have sinned and come short of the glory of God. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

Here an important question arises. What was the effect of this interview on Nicodemus? Was any spiritual change wrought in him? Did he become an actual disciple of Jesus and accept his doctrines and follow Him in the way of life? Saluting Him in terms of high and reverent appreciation, addressing to Him deep and probing questions, and receiving from Him instructions which rank with the most personal and precious and profound which were ever uttered by the Son of God, did he get any further and really take Jesus for his Saviour? May we think of him as a truly converted man?

The answer to this question must be in the affirmative. The record does not lend the emphasis to this affirmation which one would gladly see placed upon it; at the same time it is clear that after a fashion—a fashion concerning which something more will need to be said—he yielded to the claims of Jesus and committed his soul to His renewing grace.

Outside the gospel of John there is no reference to Nicodemus in the New Testament. Even in John there are but three passages in which he is brought into view. One is the classic passage in which the conversation he had with our Lord is given. Another is the passing glimpse afforded us in the sharp and manly protest he made against the injustice of the rulers when they proposed to violate their own laws

s well as all laws of fair dealing by condemning Jesus unheard. The third notice of him is that in which he came forward with his munificent gift of about a hundred pounds of mingled myrrh and aloes that the broken body of Him who knew no sin, but who suffered and died for sin on the Cross, might be suitably honored in burial. In no one of these passages is it distinctly said that Nicodemus had openly confessed Christ. Joseph of Arimathea is declared to have been a disciple, though secretly for fear of the Jews; but there is no such explicit statement concerning Nicodemus.

Still, judging the tree by its fruits, it is difficult, even were one so disposed, to escape the inference that this sincere and quietly earnest man believed in the validity of the claims of Jesus, loved Him for the purity and wonderful attractiveness of His character, and down in his heart of hearts accepted Him as the true Messiah and the open door into the Kingdom. Presented by anybody, the costly offering with which he testified his affection for the dead Teacher would have meant much; but laid down by this man who was constitutionally timid and careful to a degree which seems often censurable, and especially at the time and in the circumstance indicated by the narrative, it could signify nothing less than that Jesus had taken a strong hold upon his entire nature and made conquest alike of his reason, his conscience and his will. In his natural make-up Nicodemus was clearly incapable of anything like a quick and independent movement, and it is hard to think of him as getting excited to the point of demonstrativeness. But drawn on by the

truth as it was given him to see the truth, and guided by the Spirit of whose guidance he may or may not have been conscious, at length, under the slow but sure process of mental and moral gravitation, he found his way into the faith of Christ. Not in charity alone, but on the ground of sober inference he must be accounted a genuine disciple of the Divine Master. Tradition has it that after the resurrection Nicodemus became a pronounced adherent of Jesus and was baptized at the hands of Peter and John. This may be true or it may not. But whatever the facts of the case the conviction will abide in all reasonable and generous minds that Nicodemus loved Jesus and in turn was loved by Jesus with a saving love.

We reach this conclusion the more readily and rest in it with the more confidence because Nicodemus furnishes us a type of the Christian character which has been found in all the centuries since our Lord was here and which still exists. Church rolls are not an infallible evidence of changed hearts and acceptability with God. As there are men in the church who are not Christians, so there are men out of the church who are Christians. In every community, we are constrained to believe, where the truth has been preached for any considerable time there are few or more persons who ought to be but who are not in the church.

The reasons for assuming this attitude and halting right where there ought to be a step forward are many and various.

It is easy to see why Nicodemus did not openly acknowledge Jesus and promptly identify himself with those who were boldly witnessing for Him and doing

what they might to promote the interests of His Kingdom. He was hindered both by too much introspection and too much timidity. With the mists of lingering doubt still hanging over his mind, it may be, and keenly alive to what it might cost him to be outspoken, he lacked the courage to break away as with a sudden wrench from his old associates in religion and enter the ranks of the discredited followers of the despised Nazarene. The same considerations which kept him back have restrained and are still restraining others of like temperament. People of this order are exceedingly sensitive. They hesitate about everything. Most of all do they hesitate in matters of faith. In almost all parishes there are individuals, well known to the ministers, who love the Lord and who are secretly in His fellowship, but who shrink like bashful children from attracting so much attention as a public confession of Christ would be sure to concentrate upon them. They trust the saving of their souls to Jesus, but they much prefer that it should all be without observation.

There are others who find the way blocked by their own exalted conceptions of what church membership means. In their estimation it is not a little thing—it is a very great thing—to be connected with an organization which an inspired Apostle has seen fit to call "the body of Christ." Getting their ideas from the New Testament and not from the lives of the average followers of the Lord, their standards of discipleship are lofty; and while it is their secret purpose to be true to these standards, they do not like to make much noise about it, nor to put themselves in position to be

criticized sharply for their inconsistencies. There are those who seem to fancy that the church is only a kind of club, and may be entered and left on the same easy terms on which clubs are joined and abandoned, or rather much easier; but the class of people now in mind have a different notion of its nature and intent, and they have no disposition to count the church other than a sacred institution. Its sacredness is what awes them and keeps them from making use of its privileges.

In still other instances, creeds are the obstacle. Men of the mold now considered are both deeply thoughtful and thoroughly conscientious. They will not go a hair's breadth beyond their honest convictions. While accepting in the main the system of doctrine held by the body of believers with which they are most closely affiliated, there are yet statements in these confessions which they cannot approve. Hence not being able to subscribe to everything in the articles of faith submitted to them they will subscribe to nothing. Or possibly the difficulties lie back in the Scriptures themselves, where there are many things hard to be understood. Failing to discriminate between essentials and non-essentials, they prefer to remain outside the church rather than even seem to be playing fast and loose with conscience. They over-magnify small things and are not sufficiently dominated by the great central facts of the Gospel. This is the explanation and to their thought the justification of the position they take. The doubts which they entertain have more influence in holding them in check than the beliefs which they cherish in pushing them forward.

Examples will readily occur to ministers and other workers who have to do with the spiritual conditions of men in which all these hindering conditions have been found combined in single individuals. Many of these have entered into rest. Beyond any gainsaying they were true Christians, sincere in their faith, pure, patient, loving, and without reproach in their lives ; but they were timid, had exalted ideas of what a public confession of Christ signifies, and were not quite clear in their own minds on some point of doctrine which the creeds and the Bible as well seem to emphasize ; and so they refused to unite with the church. In all the fundamentals of Christian faith and conduct and character they were sheep in the flock which the Good Shepherd leads into green pastures and beside still waters ; but they lived and died outside the earthly fold.

While tenderly respecting their feelings and motives and granting all which in the utmost stretch of charity can be claimed in their behalf, it admits of little question that disciples of Jesus who assume and maintain these attitudes make a very serious mistake.

It was a mistake in Nicodemus that he did not come out openly and boldly on the side of Jesus and take a stand at whatever cost for the new truth and the new way of life which the Son of God brought into the world. His own comfort of heart, his growth in grace and knowledge, self-respect and fidelity to what would seem to have been his real convictions, immediate and future usefulness, were reasons abundant for a positive pronouncement from his lips and for a fearless identification of his life with the life of the followers

of Jesus. How eminently helpful he might have been in those early struggles when it was truth against tradition and the few against the many. What holy daring his words and his example might have inspired in the hearts of the timid and despairing. What a splendid place he might have won in the list of those who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name, and who every day in Temple and at home ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ. He could not have been a Peter nor a John nor a Paul; but he might have been himself, and, being himself and fully surrendered to the Lord, he might have rendered an illustrious service to Christianity in its beginning and made his career a watchword and an encouragement to all workers forever. He consented to be a star so small in dimensions, so circumscribed in orbit, and so feeble in shining, that it is still a question in debate whether he really ought to have a place in our Christian constellation, when he might have been a star of the first magnitude, riding high in his circuit and sending his beams afar. He was timid when he ought to have been courageous; he hesitated when he ought to have sprung to action; and his glorious opportunity for witnessing to Jesus was lost to him beyond recovery.

As Nicodemus back in his day was justly chargeable with a mistake, and a very grievous mistake, in not committing himself without reserve to the cause of our Lord, so do the men and women of our day who believe and yet refuse to make any out-and-out acknowledgment of their faith expose themselves to the same indictment. They stand in their own light. They

obstruct their own progress. They limit the value of their testimony and their influence for good. They count for little when they might count for much on the side of the aggressive work of the church. Leaning in the right direction, they yet lean but lightly when they ought to be leaning with all their weight. Their place is in the church.

If a man stays out of the church for the reason that he thinks the church is not good enough for him to enter, he does well. Be one's claims to faith and to character what they may, the conceit of superior piety is always enough to raise the question whether the person possessing this conceit is quite fit to join the church of the meek and lowly One.

If a man stays out of the church for the reason that in the course of business he thinks that he may sometime want to do something which will be considered allowable and perhaps smart in the manufacturing and commercial world, but which will not look well when brought up against Christian ideals of integrity and righteousness, he does well. He is where he belongs, and the right thing for him to do will be to remain exactly where he is until he is ready to cut loose from the world by removing all entanglements and expectations which will be likely to involve him in crooked dealings.

If a man stays out of the church for the reason that his heart is still full of hate and bitterness and he harbors grudges against those who would be fellow-members with him were he to unite with the church, he does well. There are too many in the church al-

ready whose stock in trade is criticism, and who have just spiritual life enough to snarl and growl and pick flaws with everybody and everything.

But for true disciples, men and women who are sincere and loving and upright and in hearty sympathy with all that is distinctive and elevating and comforting in the Christian faith, to remain out of the church because they are timid, or because they are so distrustful of their ability to live up to what they are accustomed to think church membership requires, or because there are some points in the creeds which they do not wholly understand or quite accept, is to commit a grave error both as respects duty and privilege. The church is for them and they are for the church. The church will help them and they will help the church. Their satisfaction in the Christian life, their growth in the elements of character which will make them more and more like the Master, their efficiency in spheres of activity which will tend to hasten the coming of the Kingdom, will all be promoted by an open avowal of faith. Pride is to be slain if it stands in the way of duty to Christ; so, too, are self-distrust and diffidence to be overcome if they obstruct service. High ideals are good; but high ideals must be incentives to action and not discouragements; wings on which to mount upward and not leaden weights to hold one down. We may speculate on many things and reach conclusions which are peculiarly our own on not a few of the topics which are up for discussion, or we may hold our opinions in abeyance till more light is gained; but we must not permit doubts and questions concerning incidental truths to hinder us in the dis-

charge of the great plain duties of the Christian life. To obey is better than sacrifice. To obey is also better than to linger in the mists and fogs of fruitless speculation, or to pitch tents and dwell permanently on the border land of hesitation because all things are not so clear to us as are some things.

The church is not perfect—far from it—but of all the great organizations of the earth there is no one, on the whole, that is dominated by such lofty ideals and aims, and which holds within its membership so many good men and women as the Church of Christ. It both requires and promotes faith in God, sincerity of motive, purity of life, unselfish devotion to the interests of humanity, and a loyalty which is unwavering to the ends of truth and righteousness. It aids a man in the fight both with the evil that is within him and without him to be an aggressive worker in the church. The more good men there are in the church, following Christ with all fidelity and doing with their might what their hands find to do, the more sure and rapid will be the progress of the race toward the goal of highest attainable perfection. Nicodemus ought to have been an open and avowed disciple of Christ. So ought all who have reached his state of mind and heart. *"If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be; if any man serve Me, him will the Father honor."*

SAUL OF TARSUS.

"Whereupon as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at mid-day, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining around about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. And I said, Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me."—Acts 26:12-18.

XV.

SAUL OF TARSUS.

The Apostle Paul is the most distinguished convert which Christianity ever made. The story of his conversion is also the most remarkable story of its kind which was ever told. It is impossible not to think that a man so exceptional in his endowments, and who was brought to Christ in a way so extraordinary, must have been called into life and led by the hand of providence through all his early training and strange experience to fulfill some great design and accomplish some mighty work. His career was an event in the history of the Christian Church second in importance only to that of the Divine Master whom he followed.

Dates are not given; but it is open to fair inference from the statements that he was a "young man" at the martyrdom of Stephen and that before his death, which occurred at a period between the years of Our Lord 58 and 68, he was "Paul the aged," that at some time not long after the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem Paul was born at Tarsus. Tarsus, as he justly claims, was no "mean city." As a center of learning it ranked with Athens and Alexandria, and as a center of trade it was of great commercial importance. Besides it was the capital of Cilicia, which was then a Roman province; and in virtue of the freedom which had been conferred upon it by imperial authority was entitled to be governed by its own laws and guarded by its own

soldiers. The freedom thus granted, however, did not at that time carry with it the proud distinction of citizenship in the empire on which the Apostle fell back in his hour of stress. In some way not made known to us his father secured this coveted privilege and the son had come into the inheritance of it. He was "a Roman born."

But while in his relations to the state he was a Roman citizen, in his ancestry and training and instincts and sympathies and associations and hopes Paul was wholly and intensely Jewish. There was no intermixture of outside blood in his veins; he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. Instructed first at home, he was later a pupil of the eminent and judicious Gamaliel at Jerusalem; and his education both at the family altar and in the school which he attended must have confirmed him in the validity of the opinions and convictions entertained by the race to which he belonged. There was no faltering in his conformity to the law; for in this he was blameless. In his habits and in his scrupulous devotion to the ritual of the church he was a Pharisee. His zeal was hot to the point of madness, and his wild enthusiasm mounted to such heights that he was ready to persecute to the death all who fell away to the faith of the despised Nazarene.

The occasion of exhibiting what was at once the energy of his nature and the fierceness of his opposition to the new way of salvation came to Paul through the systematic and terrible outbreak of persecution which followed the demonstrations of Pentecost.

Very naturally the Scribes and Pharisees supposed that the crucifixion of Jesus was the end of His claims

and of their own troubles. Another half-crazy fanatic, so they imagined, had suffeerd the penalty of his fanaticism, and another name of warning had been added to the list of those who had misled the people by pretensions which he could not justify.

But this fond dream of the foes of Jesus was not to be realized. There was a crucifixion; but there was also a resurrection. They could nail the Christ to the cross; but they could not hold the Christ in the tomb. For this task no stone rolled against the door was big enough, no soldiers were vigilant and strong enough. The Crucified One had come forth from the grave where they laid Him; and the disciples, instead of being permanently disheartened and overwhelmed as if in the death on the cross some hopeless disaster had befallen them and their cause, were bearing triumphant witness to the risen Lord. Cast down at first, the disciples seemed now to be elated and jubilant, and in the name and power of Him who had burst the bands of death they were actually working miracles. As unaccountable as it might appear to hot-headed opponents, thousands, persuaded by the truth of what the Apostles affirmed, were becoming believers.

The outlook to Scribes and Pharisees was serious. Something effective must be done. The ecclesiastical authorities laid hands on Peter and John. Straight into the faces of these ecclesiastical authorities the Apostles testified to Christ, and were permitted to depart with only a threat which they refused to heed. Things were evidently growing worse and not better, and once more the leaders laid their hands on the

Apostles and thrust them into prison. Through some mysterious process prison doors swung open, and when these troublesome men were supposed to be secure in the grip of the law, helpless victims shut fast in their cells, humbled and subdued, it might be hoped, to the point of surrender, lo and behold, they were abroad, and at daybreak were teaching the people in the temple as the angel of the Lord had directed.

The conflict sharpened and came to a crisis in the person of Stephen. "Full of grace and power," he "wrought great wonders and signs among the people." Doing to the disciples what they had done to the Master, the rulers in church affairs put this fearless and devoted man to death. They immortalized him by martyrdom. They gave him a place in the reverent regard of the church and of mankind from which he can never be crowded. The example of his fidelity has illuminated history and enriched the world.

For the time, however, the powers of evil had their way. The church which the disciples had founded at Jerusalem was set upon with all the blood-hungry rage with which a pack of wolves would come down upon an unprotected fold, and under the sharp assault its members were scattered abroad. The statement is that "all"—"all—except the Apostles," were driven away. This "all" need not be taken literally. It is used in a general sense, and simply means that the most of them, the large majority, so many of them that the numbers who were left made no show in the count, were forced out of the city. The Apostles remained. They remained, either because they had better facilities for taking care of themselves than the others had, or be-

cause they were more courageous and determined, or because they felt that the command of the Lord was upon them to bear full witness right where they were before leaving for any reason or attempting to carry the glad tidings elsewhere. Those who were new to the faith, it may be, or did not feel under any special constraint to linger, sought escape from the storm by going out into Judea or up into Samaria. But this scattering of the disciples only started new centers for the spread of the truth; for these smitten believers took their faith along with them, and as they moved here and there they preached the word.

It was in the later stages of these sad and cruel doings that Saul of Tarsus emerged into view. When his persecutors in the fury of their mad zeal decided to put Stephen out of the way by stoning him to death, Saul was present. He gave his consent to the murder. While the stoning was going on, "the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." Little did he imagine that while these garments of the witnesses were lying there at his feet the mantle of the martyr was falling on his shoulders, and that one day he would be the most fearless and illustrious exponent the world was to know of the very doctrines for which this rare, sweet soul was yielding up his life. God's ways are not our ways.

But this taste of success in the bad business on which he and his associates in persecution had so boldly ventured only served to whet the appetite of the "young man named Saul." He became famous in his attempts to resist the new movement and to stamp out the spark of the new truth before it kindled into a

blaze and flamed abroad in a general conflagration. "But Saul laid waste the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women committed them to prison." He was young, he was daring, he was enthusiastic; and he took all the strength of his youth and all the bravery of his heart and all the fresh impulses of his intense nature and turned them over to the bad service of annihilating Christianity by frightening all believers into silence or hurrying them into their graves. He seemed the incarnation of cruelty, and his hate was like the fire of the pit burning in his bones. This is his own confession: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this I also did in Jerusalem; and I both shut up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death I gave my vote against them. And punishing them often times in all the synagogues, I strove to make them blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities." He was a terror to believers, and his movements had in them the impetuosity and destructiveness of a cyclone.

Not content with the numbers he could crush in and near Jerusalem, this zealous persecutor, as stated in the passage just quoted from the address to Agrippa, felt called upon to carry consternation and death to "foreign cities." "But Saul yet breathing threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest and asked of him letters to Damascus unto the synagogues, that if he found any that

were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." It was his determination to make a clean sweep and leave not so much as the faintest trace in any part of the land of this impertinent and annoying heresy.

Wonder is often expressed that authority like this could be lodged in the Sanhedrin and that cruelty to the extreme here contemplated, could be permitted and carried out under the government of Rome. But the Jews were a difficult people to control. They had had a great past, and their strong national pride drifted easily over into obstinacy. Any curtailment of their ancient rights and liberties touched them on tender spots and excited sharp opposition. Hence, Julius Caesar made the concession,—a concession which it was prudent as well as considerate to make, that the Jews might live under their own laws. Augustus converted this into the established policy. This gave to the Jews the right to manage their own property interests and to exercise jurisdiction over their own members. By this arrangement the high priest had wide recognition and great power with the people of his own race. He and those who were associated with him in authority, barring a single exception, could do anything to Jews so long as they did not invade the prerogatives of Roman citizens. The exception was that the infliction of the death penalty was a right held in reserve by the sovereign nation. Still, as a matter of fact, it was of small concern, especially in Nero's reign, how many of these recalcitrant subjects were killed off. This explains the permission Paul

received; and it shows how there could be this small but fine grinding Jewish wheel within the larger Roman wheel.

Armed with these credentials, our bitter persecutor set out on his journey of about one hundred and fifty miles northward to the old and beautiful capital of Syria. Those were slow-going days, and it took him the better part of a week to cover this distance. At length he drew nigh to his destination. The walls of the city and the outlines of the ancient edifices broke on his eager view. In a little while he would be able to enter upon the unholy business contemplated in his letters, and fill many hearts and households with dismay.

But at this point something happened. Affairs took an unexpected and startling turn. The mad persecuting intent was not carried out. The hand lifted in wrath and poised in readiness to strike a murderous blow did not fall. The trembling victims, many of whom, no doubt, had gone into hiding on the reports of threatened mischief which had reached them were not pursued.

What was it that happened? In the words in which he recounted his experience to the king at Caesarea, and which have been placed before us for exposition, the Apostle has told us. Amid overpowering demonstrations of light and under the pressure of an unforeseen Presence, the determined persecutor was suddenly smitten down and converted to the faith which he hated and was trying to uproot.

It is needless to say that this narrative brings us face to face with the supernatural. A change so

quickly wrought, and so radical and enduring, as seen in the new type of character taken on by the subject of it, and in the new and matchless life of service which was entered upon and continued to the end, admits of explanation on no theory short of divine interposition. All the facts are of this order, and like compass to north star they point steadily in this direction.

Here was a light that was supernatural,—“a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me.” The radiance was something quite beyond the splendor of the beams of even a midday Syrian sun. Here was a voice that was supernatural,—“and when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?” The voice was audible. But there was no eye sharp enough to detect the source from which it came. Here was a Person who was supernatural,—“and I said: Who art Thou, Lord? And the Lord said: I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” It was the crucified and risen and ascended Lord, reappearing in some form exactly suited to His purpose, that He might arrest this man in his career of slaughter, and turn his splendid faculties and boundless energy and his quenchless enthusiasm and his superb discipline over to the advocacy of the truth as it is in Jesus. Here, as has just been said, was a transformation in spirit and aim and direction of life which was supernatural. He came to the city full of wrath against the disciples; he entered the city with a soul renewed by the grace of God in Christ, and in both mind and heart prepared to receive instruction in faith and duty from

the lips of the very disciples whom it had been his consuming purpose to destroy. He had been born from above. He was a new creation.

It has been held by some that the words of the prayer of Stephen which he offered when in the final throes of mortal agony, and the light of the vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of God which played on the brave martyr's face, and the attitude of triumphant joy which he assumed when his released spirit was about to go bounding upward through the gates into the immortal city, could not be dismissed from the mind of Paul, but lingered on in his memory and wrought upon him—often, it is easy to imagine to the point of keenest torment—till his soul was filled with doubt and his will was weakened with misgivings and he was ready and even glad to surrender.

Others have conjectured that, while there may have been no indication of it in his outward conduct, unless the very extravagance and passionateness of his opposition be accepted as such an indication, a gradual change had been taking place in the thought of Paul in reference to Jesus and His claims—a change likely to be accelerated by the reflections which would come to him through the days and nights of the long journey from Jerusalem to Damascus—and that this would go far toward explaining the readiness with which he yielded to the divine influences he encountered when there in sight of the Syrian capital.

Still others would get rid of all that is distinctive and extraordinary in the conversion of Paul by discrediting the record and remanding everything in it which does not tally with some preconceived notion

or theory to the convenient limbo of myth or the fancy of some ambitious and not over-scrupulous writer or copyist. In a book on "Paul" which has just been given to the world, and which has been pronounced by some reviewers as of such high merit that there will be no need of another work of a similar kind for a long time to come, this language is used: "The conversion of a Jew to Christianity was not so unusual at the time that there was any occasion for proclaiming the fact as a miracle; and if the church had never had the accounts of Paul's conversion in the Acts, which show how the event was regarded a half century or so after it happened, and how tradition had given the occurrence a legendary form and embellishment, no one would have thought of resorting to a miracle to explain it."

How easy! How simple! Apply the touchstone of "tradition," of "legend," of "embellishment" to the account, and all that is wonderful in it will be seen at once to be only the base metal of somebody's vivid and fertile imagination. Jews were turning to the faith in a quiet way; therefore it is unreasonable to believe that the conversion of this particular Jew—Saul of Tarsus—could have been attended by any unusual displays of the divine presence. Turn Luke, who was a companion of Paul in much of his missionary work, and who most likely received these reports of the addresses in which the Apostle related the initial experience of his Christian life from the lips of Paul, out of court, and tear the book of Acts into shreds and patches, and all that was peculiar in the change through which the mad persecutor passed in becoming a disciple of our

Lord disappears! A few off-hand opinions—a few strokes of the pen—and it is all done. One feels like submitting to these nimble-method critics the question which blind old Isaac put to Jacob when he brought him the dish of savory venison which his mother had extemporized from goat's meat: "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?"

But surely this will not do. There may be something in some of the suggestions which have been brought forward. It may be granted that there were "psychological antecedents" to the conversion of Paul as in the instances of other men. It may be granted that "divine grace" in moving human souls into the faith of Christ "does not act independently of subjective conditions." Perhaps there is no case in which all this is more evident than in the case of Paul. Yet this in no wise invalidates the story of his turning to the Lord as we have it in the Scriptures. The truth of the record will hold its ground against all assaults.

So we say again that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was a supernatural event. It was brought about by supernatural influence and agencies. The change of heart which he experienced, so sharp and complete, along with the marvelous incidents which accompanied this change, will stand out to the end of time as an evidence that in ways transcending the ordinary methods of approach God can enter into the lives of men and make them different—radically different—from what they were or could have been without this divine interposition. Paul did not find Christ because he was searching for Him and wanted to find him; Christ was brought to him and revealed to him. Paul

did not climb up to Christ on the ladder of his own logic; Christ descended upon him in the midst of miraculous displays of subduing power and constrained him to fall in with the new faith and accept the new life and begin a new career. He went forth in hate; he was met in love. He went to smite; he was smitten. He went to conquer; he was conquered. He went an aggressive and furious foe to Jesus; Jesus seized him and made him His friend and advocate forever.

It is a striking confirmation of what is here said about the supernatural influences which operated on Paul in his conversion and of the profound impression he received from the appearing to him of Christ, in the way in which He did appear to him there before Damascus, that in his very first sermon he proclaimed Jesus to be *the Son of God*. Peter, as was natural, in his discourse on the Day of Pentecost laid stress on the resurrection of Jesus. This seems to have been the glad thought in the heart of all the disciples, that Christ was risen. Paul also emphasized this. But the fact which took hold of him at the outset, and which held its grip on him all through was the divinity of our Lord. "And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that He is *the Son of God*."

What took place after this first experience of Paul in which, as by an invisible hand, he was struck to the earth and rendered blind, and in which all that was most vital and significant in the mighty change wrought in him occurred, need not detain us either for rehearsal or comment. For the incidents immediately following concern not so much the conversion of the

Apostle as the adjustment of himself to the new conditions into which he had come. By further revelations of Christ in him, and by the ministry of the Spirit, and by association with the disciples he was to be prepared in mind and heart for the resplendent service on which he was to enter. But all that came afterward is a matter by itself.

This, for substance, is the account as we have it in the Scriptures of the conversion of the Great Apostle. While we might stop here, it is yet hardly advisable to dismiss the narrative from consideration without lingering long enough to indicate two or three important inferences which it yields.

It is clear from the record that God can soften the hardest heart and subdue the most stubborn will and change the bitterest enemy of Jesus into a most loyal and devoted friend.

To this young and ardent Jew the claims of the Nazarene seemed at war alike with sound reason and true religion. He felt bound in conscience to do his utmost to prevent the acknowledgment of His claims. He "verily thought" he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." Against Christian disciples everywhere he was "exceedingly mad." His madness mastered all his energies and filled the hearts of believers with fear and trembling, and his footsteps among them were marked with blood. Save that men of enthusiastic natures and violent impulses do sometimes react with surprising quickness from extreme positions, it is hard to think of any person less likely to reverse his attitude and bow in faith and love to Jesus than this resolute and impetuous persecutor.

Nevertheless, in a manner nobody could have foreseen, he was overcome and set square about and made a follower of the meek and lowly One. As in the instance of the elder Saul, the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and God gave him another heart and he was turned into another man. His fierce madness against the new religionists who were everywhere spoken against was transformed into a wholesome sanity, and his burning zeal of hate became a burning zeal of love and matchless devotion.

What has been may be. It was not absurd to pray for the conversion of Robert Ingersoll. The grace which conquered Paul is equal to the victory of any man. Augustine was subdued by it. So were John Bunyan and John Newton. There is no man who in his traditions and opinions is so far away from the faith; no man who is so entrenched in his infidel or atheistic views, that devout souls may not hopefully bear his name on high and cry to God with mighty importunity for his salvation. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus furnishes abundant assurance that others who are equally removed from the probability of being persuaded into the faith may yet be reached and brought into sweet submission to our divine Lord.

“Ah, grace; into unlikeliest hearts
It is thy boast to come,
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home.”

When God has a hard place to fill He knows just where to find the man to fill it; and the agents and instruments which He employs for conspicuous service are always selected with unerring skill.

Following the closing scenes of the life of our Lord on earth, and the formal organization of the Christian Church by the descent of the Holy Spirit with power on the Day of Pentecost there were two great and pressing tasks to be performed. One was summing up and interpreting the mission of Jesus to the world, or translating His mission into statements which would accurately measure the meaning of His life and death. The other was making known the story of Jesus everywhere and among all classes and conditions of people just as speedily as possible. The two tasks in the actual performance of them ran into each other, and the doing of the one often had intimate relations with the doing of the other; but these were the two services to be rendered.

For eminently successful labor in each of these fields the Apostle to the Gentiles had remarkable qualifications. He could write and he could work.

In the first place in virtue of his superior natural endowments, of his thorough mental discipline, of his careful training in the law and the prophets, of his peculiar experience in finding his way into the faith, he was fitted beyond any man of his time of whom we have knowledge to be the accepted interpreter of Him who came into the world to be the way and the truth and the life to lost men. To state the case still more specifically, he had the knowledge of God's dealing with Israel in the past, the apprehension of the divine purpose which was to be realized in the fulness of time, the quick-kindling sympathy with human needs, the imagination which feels the majesty of truth and glows in the contemplation of it, the outlook

which, while not neglectful of facts small and near, takes in wide sweeps of thought and moves on with God toward far-off divine events, the severe logical faculty which understands how to go straight from premise to conclusion, the vital union and close personal intimacy with Christ, the clear insight into the necessity there was for the incarnation, and the profound comprehension of His teachings and doings and sufferings and triumphs which made him the man of men to define the Son of God to the intelligence of coming ages and to articulate the system of saving truth of which the Son of God was and is and evermore shall be the living and abiding center. If Abraham was called because he had the capabilities which especially qualified him for his mission; if Moses was called because he had in him the elements of a great leader; if Isaiah was called because he had the faith and insight and courage to be a true prophet, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that God chose Saul of Tarsus for the reason that he had exceptional fitness for a work so delicate and difficult as this of setting forth Christ to the world in His true nature and service and aim.

What needed so much to be done Paul did. At a time when opinion required to be molded he molded it. To what, for a time at least, might otherwise have been a chaos of confused and imperfect notions he brought order. In the consistency, completeness, power and tenderness with which he sums up the work of the Redeemer his writings are still unique. For, saying nothing now of any aid from inspiration, what commentaries are there, what treaties, what homilies,

what meditations, what contributions of any kind outside the New Testament on the Person of Christ which can hold their own for a moment with the Epistles of Paul? Paul was a providential exponent of Christianity.

In the second place Paul was a worker of prodigious energy and his success in winning men into the faith of Christ was phenomenal. Some men are great thinkers; but they lack in practical sagacity and push. Some men are intensely active; but their activity lies along lines which other minds have projected. Paul was a worker as well as a thinker. Like Martin Luther of a later day, and our own Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley in England, and Thomas Chalmers in Scotland, he knew how to translate thought into action and to illustrate the faith he held in a life of burning and unquenchable zeal.

When one reads his letters, now as compact in statement as a page of Caesar, now aflame with the rapture of a psalm of David, now as free in play as a page of Emerson, now linked together in lines of argument as close as a demonstration of Euclid, now as open-eyed to flashing visions and celestial glories as Isaiah, now as simple and direct in homely suggestions as Franklin or Spurgeon, now as sweet and tender as a mother brooding over her babe, now as searching and awful as the final judgment, it seems as if this man must have spent his life in the quiet seclusion of his study where there was nothing to shock his dreams, or to interrupt the free flow of his thought, or to hinder the fashioning and re-fashioning

of his sentences until, whether in their more compact or looser form, they were made to say exactly what he wished them to say.

When one follows him up and down on his great missionary journeys, and sees with what unabated ardor he finds his way from city to city—Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem, and even to Caesarea and Rome, though in bonds—and stands beside him while he preaches,—sometimes to the few and sometimes to the many, sometimes in synagogues and sometimes in the open air, sometimes to eager inquirers and sometimes to angry howling mobs, and takes note of the many self-denials he is ready to undergo, and the incredible hardships he is ready to endure, all for the sake of making known to men the renewing love of God in Christ and doing what he may to set up the kingdom of righteousness in the earth, it seems impossible that the man should have had time and strength for anything else than just to hold forth the word and organize believers into Christian communions.

But Paul did both of these things. He wrote and he wrought. He wrote in a way to instruct all inquiring minds and he wrought in a way to be an example of Christian activity to all mankind. He was a burning and a shining light, and the flame of his devotion still glows in the sky. When we say of Carey or Judson or Livingston or Taylor or Davis or Paton, or anybody else who has gone afar with the good news of salvation, that he is like Paul we pay him the highest compliment at our command. What he said

of himself when the comparison was confined to a portion of his contemporaries,—“in labors more abundant—is still true of him when the comparison takes in the earnest workers of all the Christian centuries. Reckoning up the years which he devoted to his missionary labors, and the souls he reached, and the churches he gathered and organized, and the new moral and spiritual influences—so far as such forces can be estimated—which he set in motion, the results achieved by the Apostle will always seem one of the marvels of history. At the outset it was desirable, if a right interpretation has been given to the divine thought, to have some man in the service of Christ so wise and earnest and self-sacrificing and far-seeing in his plans that he would be both an example and inspiration to all who should come after him in aggressive service. Paul was this man, and this was the place he was chosen of God to fill.

Hence, when both requirements are taken into account,—the capacity to set forth in due form the mission of Christ to the world, and the spirit and energy to do the hard practical work of winning souls and gathering churches and directing the early movement of Christianity in a way to give it every possible advantage for future conquests, it will be easily seen how unerring was the divine wisdom which laid hold on Paul and converted him and made him a chosen instrument for propagating the gospel. Other men there are who have been eminent servants of the Lord, but it would be difficult to recall a single name among all who have been conspicuous in the years since Jesus

was on earth with the exact fitness in him to be at once the author of the Epistle to the Romans and the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Looking at the man in the light of what has now been brought before us in this hurried review, the statement made at the outset forces itself into our thought and we are constrained to feel that the Great Apostle is indeed the most distinguished convert which Christianity ever made, and that the story of his conversion is the most remarkable story of its kind which was ever told.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

"And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." Acts 2:1-2.

"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." Acts 2:41.

"But many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to be about five thousand." Acts 4:4.

XVI.

THE DAY OF PENTECOST.

In concluding this series of discussions and meditations on Typical New Testament Conversions, it would seem in every way appropriate to give some special thought to the scenes and incidents of the ever wonderful day in which thousands turned to the Lord, and the Christian Church, formally organized and baptized by the Holy Spirit, entered upon its great career of the conquest of the world. For while no opportunity is here afforded for the study of individual cases; yet the conditions under which large numbers were led to accept Christ and fall into line with the body of His followers are so clearly set forth, and are so suggestive of what may be again that it is worth while to look into these conditions with care.

There are three points of view from which to contemplate the transcendently significant event of the great Pentecostal outpouring. These three points must be seized and occupied in turn if we would get at the secret of what then and there occurred and reach trustworthy conclusions touching the causes and influences which brought it about and gave it the remarkable form and force which it assumed.

The first of these points of view is the Prayer Meeting which was begun immediately after the Ascension of our Lord and kept up until the descent of the Spirit with such extraordinary power ten days later.

The charge of the Risen Christ to the Apostles was that they should not depart from Jerusalem until they had been baptized by the Spirit, as the followers of John had been baptized with water. This baptism, He assured them, would take place within a short time, and with it would come such an access of grace and energy that they would be fitted to be His witnesses everywhere.

The little company who received this charge and this promise just before the cloud enveloped and hid Him from their sight, returned from Olivet to Jerusalem and went up into an upper chamber, and there, along with "the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren," and such other faithful and devout disciples as joined them from time to time until the number reached about a hundred and twenty, they "all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer." The further record is to the same effect. They obeyed the Master. In obeying Him they fulfilled the conditions on which He could bestow upon them the gift of the Spirit and clothe them with power. They were in one place. They were as one in their feelings. They were crying unitedly unto God. They were waiting in eager expectation of a common blessing. "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place."

It is a significant fact that this is the first instance brought to our notice in the New Testament of a gathering of believers assembled in the form and for the purpose of what has come to be known in almost all Evangelical Churches as the Prayer Meeting. Fellowship in prayer is implied in the words: "Our

Father," "give us," "forgive us," "lead us." So fellowship in prayer is implied in the assurance of Jesus concerning the two or three who may be gathered together in His name and with a united petition on their lips.

In the Old Testament times there were individual prayers of marvelous efficiency. The intercessions of Moses in behalf of Israel when Aaron had been betrayed into making the golden calf and the triumphant supplications of Elijah are classic instances. Abraham and Jacob had their family or household devotions. Prayer had an important place in the services of Temple and Synagogue. The house of God is declared by Isaiah to be "an house of prayer for all peoples." In Malachi where reference is made to the speaking of one with another of those who feared the Lord there seems to be a recognition of the social element in their worship. It is quite certain that it was a case of union in prayer when Daniel asked his companions in race and faith to "desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning the secret" of the King's dream and the right interpretation of it. It is possible that each of these men may have gone to his closet alone to make supplications; but it is more likely that they bowed together and joined in one united cry. There is a striking forecast of the modern Prayer Meeting in the select company of devout women who were wont to come together in the "place of prayer" out by the "river side" at Philippi.

Jesus had much to say on the subject of prayer. On this as on other topics which He considered He was the Great Teacher. In words as simple as the speech

of a child, but as enduring as the stars, He taught the duty and privilege of prayer. He laid open the secret of successful prayer. He showed what measureless energy resides in prayer, and what priceless satisfactions wait upon prayer, when offered in the right temper of mind and heart.

The example of Jesus was in the line of His teaching. He illustrated his sense of the need and value of prayer by frequent and sometimes protracted periods of communion with the Father. He made himself to those who were about Him and to all in after times who should know His story a great object-lesson in prayer. He felt the necessity and He experienced the joy of quiet hours with Him who had sent Him into the world. What an impressive lesson there is for all followers of Jesus in the simple statement: "And in the morning a great while before day, He rose up and went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed." He was alone—alone before the daybreak—with God. Down into what depths of holy thought and up to what sublime heights of spirituality does one feel that he is taken: in upon what a sacred intimacy of Father and Son, of Master and disciple, does one feel that he is permitted to glance, in the prayer with which our Lord concluded His discourse in the Upper Chamber.

It remains true, however, that the Prayer Meeting, as conducted by Christians, was not instituted and made an effective means for securing the divine blessing and promoting the aggressive work of the Kingdom until after the Ascension. There is no previous account of the coming together of the disciples for the

specific purpose of waiting on the Lord in united supplication for revelations from Him and enduement with the gracious power of the Spirit. Up to the hour of the crucifixion we search the gospels in vain for any such record.

After the death on the cross, and before the return of the Son of God to the heavens, on several successive occasions, we find the disciples, sometimes in larger numbers and sometimes in smaller, gathered together in a well-guarded and sacred seclusion. They met for mutual consultation and comfort, no doubt, and it is more than likely that they sought light and strength in prayer. Jesus met them when thus closeted and revealed Himself to them and made them glad with His presence. Sweet lessons taught by the Master, precious promises made by Him to the disciples, and testimony most impressive and convincing to the great fact of the resurrection of Him who had been slain on the cross, have come down to us from those seasons of communion one with another and with the Lord. Still these were not such gatherings as that which ushered in the glorious scenes of Pentecost.

It was at the point indicated in the passage now under review that meetings of disciples for united prayer and patient waiting on the Lord came into recognition and use as means and methods, not alone of individual growth and mutual edification and comfort, but for the advancement of the kingdom. The Prayer Meeting from that time on was to be the hinge on which mighty events were to turn. The Prayer Meeting was to be the reservoir in which pure and bounteous showers of grace should be gathered to be

sent out in refreshing streams to quench thirst, and to renew and beautify fields which otherwise would remain dead to all spiritual fruitfulness.

Especially is this true with reference to the endowment of disciples with the power of the Spirit. The Spirit is to be sought in prayer and He is bestowed in answer to prayer. One of the men most popular and influential just now with a large circle of people has recently intimated that the Holy Spirit is not granted to believers because they pray for His coming upon them, but for other reasons. This, however, is only another instance of the false conclusions reached when our speakers and writers resort to those half fanciful and half mystical interpretations of Scripture which violate the canons both of common sense and religious experience. The Holy Spirit is freely given, as wisdom from on high is freely given, as pardon of sin is freely given, and as grace for daily need is freely given; but men are to ask for the Spirit as they ask for these other gifts and aids. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." When "their own company," to whom Peter and John had returned after being dismissed with threats by the Council, had "lifted up their voice to God with one accord," the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness. When word was brought to the Apostles at Jerusalem that Samaria had received the "word of God," but that these new disciples had as yet only been baptized with the name of

Jesus, Peter and John "prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit." Paul made supplication that the Ephesians might be "strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man." Here the Spirit was sought; and he was sought for precisely the same object our Lord had in mind when he charged the disciples to tarry for the promise of the Father; namely, power. "But ye shall receive power." "Strengthened with power through His Spirit."

In this way of prayer the blessing came. These disciples prayed all the doors of access to their souls wide open and the Spirit came in and possessed them. Asking and waiting they met all the conditions of baptism by the Spirit; and when they were baptized in this wise they went forth quickened, as we shall see further on, in every pulse of their spiritual life and charged with an energy that was divine.

The second point of view from which to contemplate the Day of Pentecost and its marvelous issues is the direct and manifest agency of the Spirit in what then and there occurred.

Please observe exactly what was charged and what was promised by the risen Christ and what was the course of events.

Here is the preliminary statement in which the disciples are told what to do and what they may expect. "And, being assembled together with them, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise from the Father, which said He, ye heard from me; for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence." A little further on there is a more explicit

statement concerning both the nature and the purpose of this promised baptism with the Holy Spirit. "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses." Following this is the brief account of the ten days of earnest supplication and patient waiting. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet. And when they were come in, they went up into the upper chamber where they were abiding. These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer." Crowning and fulfilling all the assurances and all the expectations, we have this account: "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

This last paragraph announces the Spirit actively present and poured out in the fulness of the promise. The demonstration was sudden and amazing. There was a startling sound. It was a sound out of the heavens, and such a sound as might have been produced by the onswEEP of a mighty wind. It was like, and yet it was unlike, the great and strong wind which rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces in the day of Elijah; for God was in it, and the wind was the breath of God moving in on the hearts of men and quickening them unto new perceptions and new spiritual energies. All the house where they were sitting

was filled with the strange influence, and the whole company became conscious that the atmosphere was charged with unwonted and mysterious forces. The place glowed with supernatural flame; and these inmates of the room saw shafts of light—what some have called “tongues of fire”—distributed to the entire group, or resting down for a moment on the head of each and then quickly vanishing.

But this was only the outward accompaniment and display of something more wonderful which took place within. These disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. They had been charged to wait for the Spirit; and now the Spirit was upon them and they were filled. Every depth of their being was penetrated; every faculty was stimulated; every conception of duty and privilege was exalted; and they were in a very literal and profound sense of the word made new creatures. They could think thoughts and speak words and do deeds which were altogether impossible to them before; and they were ready to be used of the Lord in setting up His Kingdom.

Particularly is this true of their enlarged ability to do effective service in winning men to the faith. This, bear in mind, is what Jesus would seem to have had prominently in thought when He gave His directions to His disciples. For the two key-words of what He said are “power” and “witnesses.” “Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and ye shall be my witnesses.” Witnessing in one form and another was to be pre-eminently their work; but their witnessing would be largely in vain unless it were in the wisdom and might and under the guidance of the

Spirit. The old text was to have a fresh illumination. It was not to be any "might," or force which resides in combinations of men, nor by any "power" which the skill and energy of men can supply, but by the Spirit of God. Endued with the Spirit they could lift up Christ in a way to make Him attractive to the world.

All this—the promise made by Jesus and the expectations cherished by the disciples of a power to be bestowed by which to do effective witnessing, had quick and ample verification. In the filling of these awaiting believers with the Holy Spirit a marked and mighty transformation was brought about both in their intellectual and moral attitude and in the persuasive value of their testimony. To be more specific, three things of great significance were accomplished.

In the first place the minds of the Apostles, as has been said already, were marvelously illuminated. In virtue of this baptism of the Spirit, they had an eye to see what otherwise would have been invisible, and an ear to hear what otherwise would have been inaudible; and the fact of salvation through the redeeming love of God in Christ all at once became clear and large to their thought and glowed with a supernatural radiance. Taught by the Spirit and inspired by the Spirit, there was sudden sunrise in their souls, and every mountain peak and every valley of the truth with which they had to deal was lighted up, and they knew as by intuition all the secrets of the new way of life. What ordinarily comes to men only after long and faithful study came to these simple-minded disciples of Jesus with the quickness of a lightning flash. For the time being they could speak with other tongues; for the Spirit gave

them utterance. They could beat the linguists on their own ground; for they had been at school to Him who is Master of all modes of communication. Their intellectual faculties became the organ of the mind of God, and God spoke through them.

In the second place the Apostles were emboldened. Peter for instance became a new man. When like tides out of the vast deeps of the heart of God, he felt the flow of the Spirit into his soul, Peter was no longer the old Peter, but a new Peter. His striking individuality was preserved. In his natural temperament and disposition he was still impulsive and capable of great enthusiasm. But as soon as he was filled with the Spirit, the Peter of the Gospels disappeared and in his stead there emerged the Peter of the Acts. He was no longer the Peter who, with the other disciples, could leave the Master in his hour of arrest and flee for personal safety. He was no longer the Peter who could persuade himself to follow the Master afar off. A woman's question could never again unnerve him. Angry threats had no more terrors for his soul. Jeremiah was never more forward to speak in the face of opposition, nor was Daniel ever more resolute in circumstances of danger, than was Peter after the Pentecostal baptism.

No doubt the interview of our Lord with Peter after the resurrection had had much to do with re-enforcing his courage and putting him in mood to take a brave stand whenever an emergency might arise calling for courage. It is just as clear, however, that had he not been filled with the Spirit as he was he would never have been equal to the task he assumed. It was the

Spirit, charging his soul with moral dynamite and kindling his lips as with a live coal from off the altar, which made him the vigorous and dauntless advocate he was of the risen Christ.

One of the writers on this passage has called attention to the marvelous change which the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit effected in the Apostle. In his estimation this change was so radical that, "if we were reading a fictitious history, we should rightly criticise the author for want of consistency in his portraiture of the same character in the first and second volumes of his work." This is quite true. In his superb courage, as well as in his deeper and finer comprehension of the prophecies which related to Christ and the teachings which fell from the lips of Christ; and in the heroic eagerness with which he seized opportunities and sprang to duty in lofty disdain of attempted intimidation and bodily perils, there is something so different from both the old timidity and the old rash impulsiveness that we seem to be dealing with another sort of person. Through the transformation wrought by the Spirit, Peter became as clear-eyed as an eagle and as bold as a lion.

In the third place the people were put in readiness to receive the truth which was brought to them by the Apostles. The hearts and consciences of the people, like a good soil made fit for good seed, were prepared to accept promptly the offer of salvation which was made to them.

It is worth noting that of all the Feasts of the Jewish Calendar there was none which would attract so many people from so many remote districts to

Jerusalem as this Feast of Weeks. At the season of Harvest on First Fruits weather conditions were favorable. Whether traveling by sea or land men could reach the Holy City without difficulty or peril. Consequently there were a larger number and a greater variety of nationalities then present for the truth to touch and influence than might have been anticipated at any other gathering. It is God's way to fit new revelations and advance movements to suitable occasions.

The news of what had occurred spread rapidly. Either because they themselves had heard the sound which startled the disciples, or because tidings of it like a cry of fire had leaped from mouth to mouth till all knew what had happened, or because the Spirit pervaded not only the atmosphere of the room where the disciples were assembled, but of the whole city as well and shed some special influence on these strangers within the gates, the descent of the Spirit upon the followers of Jesus and the gift of tongues which accompanied this descent and which seems to have been bestowed upon the whole company, were made known very speedily to the multitudes and multitude-like the people rushed together.

No attempt is put forth to conceal the great astonishment with which these visitors from near and far listened to what they heard. Here were unlettered Galileans speaking with a marvelous insight and eloquence of the wonderful works of God. Moreover they were using language which was intelligible alike to Parthians and Elamites, to Messopotamians and Egyptians, to Romans and Arabians, and to other repre-

sentatives of distant countries. But the fact of chief import is that these people were not only interested to a degree unprecedented, but they were profoundly impressed. For their hearts, like the heart of Lydia, had been opened by the Lord. They were under the quickening power of the Spirit. Waves of light and warmth—breathings out of heaven—had struck them and made such a change in their spiritual attitude that they were responsive to the truth, and could be led into the acceptance of Christ.

Thus in the new and clearer apprehension of the truth as it is in Jesus which the Apostles received through the baptism of Spirit, and in the splendid courage which was imparted to them for the delivery of their message, and in the preparation to hear the truth declared to them which was given to the multitude, all the conditions of a genuine and widespread revival were met, and it is not at all surprising that thousands yielded to God and accepted the salvation made possible to them and to all mankind by Him “who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

It is only natural that the question should have been asked: “What meaneth this?” For here was something which challenged curiosity and appeared to be worth knowing. The mockers were ready with an explanation. The mockers are always ready with explanations when confronted with what is spiritual and supernatural. Their explanations never get above the level of their own gross natures; but they are prompt with them.

When Peter with freshly illuminated mind and em-

boldened heart stood forth and in plain, simple language rehearsed the story of the redeeming love which had culminated in the crucified and risen Christ, the explanations of the mockers vanished like a wisp of cloud in the upper air when struck by a northwest wind, and the truth took hold of the people. Their hearts were pierced; their reason was swayed; their stubbornness was overcome, and there was a mighty cry for the way of life. Never before had any word about Jesus had such an immediate and wide-sweeping effect in producing conviction of sin and leading to trust in the great Sin-Bearer. The speaker and the audience alike were under the influence of the Spirit, and the truth uttered was attended by the all-conquering force of the Spirit. Hence the matchless outcome of the testimony. For the thousands who repented and were baptized on the Day of Pentecost are the everlasting witnesses to the irresistible force there is in the truth of God when proclaimed by men and to men who are under the power of the Spirit.

The third point of view from which to study the Day of Pentecost if we would master the secret of its wonderful outcome is the privilege the Apostles had at that time, as ever afterward, of holding forth Christ in the completeness of His nature and mission.

In a study of Christ as He is brought to our knowledge in the Gospels two facts emerge. The significance of these two facts is so great, and the bearing of them on the position here taken is so direct, that it seems worth while to be at considerable pains to apprehend them clearly and to state them accurately.

The first fact is that not all at once, but only by a process of gradual development, did Christ make known His nature and mission.

Dr. Stalker, in his exceedingly valuable work on *The Christology of Christ*, says "the impression that Jesus referred but little to His own death is due to a superficial reading of the Gospels. A closer acquaintance with them reveals the fact that at no period of His ministry was the thought of His death foreign to Him, and that during the last year of His life it was an ever present and absorbing pre-occupation." This is true; but the emphasis needs to fall on the final clause of the statement that it was as the end drew near that Jesus more and more pressed the idea and purpose of His death to the front, and more and more sought to impart this idea and purpose to the inner company of his followers.

The birth of Jesus was attended with announcements and demonstrations which certified to His divinity. Once in His boyhood He came into view in circumstances to reveal extraordinary qualities of insight and the consciousness of unique relations to the Father. For thirty years, however, His life was one of quiet toil and obscurity. Whatever His own thoughts may have been and whatever the notions of Him which were entertained by His neighbors and friends, He made no sign and there was no inference abroad that He was the promised Messiah.

When He had been baptized and had entered on His ministry, He put Himself in the line of the prophets by preaching repentance after the manner of John. His forerunner declared Him to be the Lamb of God

which taketh away the sin of the world. This declaration held in it the whole story of the suffering and death of Christ. Not immediately, however, did he seize and enforce the deeper sense involved in the words. It is easy to see now that what He said and what He did implied all that was disclosed at a later stage concerning Himself and His work; still only by cautious steps did He approach the full announcement of what awaited Him. To quote Dr. Stalker once more: "He kept back as long as He could from the Twelve His anticipation of His own fate: but when He did begin to speak, it was manifest that what He had to communicate had long been in His mind craving for utterance."

Recall some of these prophetic outlooks as we find them on pages of Matthew. Following the confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God, made by Peter at Caesarea Philippi, we come upon these words: "From that time began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up." Up to "that time" these disclosures had been held in reserve; but from "that time" on the veil which concealed His closing days was on fit occasions gently drawn aside. A little further along there is a similar statement. "And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, the Son of Man shall be delivered up into the hands of men; and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised up." Again we read: "And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples apart and on the way He said unto

them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and scribes; and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him unto the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify: and the third day He shall be raised up."

There are other passages freighted with the same import and shadowed with the same cloud. But these are enough to show that, while the thought of His tragic death was clearly and deeply in His own mind, the explicit announcement of it was made by Jesus, not at the beginning, but only toward the close of His ministry; and then, not in the public manner of His Sermon on the Mount, but in a quiet, reserved, and for the most part half confidential way to those who were nearest to Him in faith and love.

The second fact is that even after Christ had begun to unfold His nature and mission, and had made statements which definitely forecast His approaching death and resurrection, the disciples were exceedingly dull in apprehending the meaning of what He was saying and making it real to their minds.

One would think the statements made by Jesus sufficiently plain to be comprehended by anybody. But the disciples blundered and stumbled over them. They had other conceptions of Jesus and His work, and other anticipations of the issue of His life on earth than a violent death at the hands of His bitter enemies. Was He not here to set up a kingdom, and was not this kingdom to be resplendent with power, all conquering and enduring? Naturally their loyalty to Jesus, and the tenderness of heart they felt toward Him, made

the disciples reluctant to accept any forecast which associated pain and humiliation with His closing days. Still it was these pre-conceptions more than anything else which warped their minds and rendered them incapable of taking in the full significance of what was said to them by their Great Teacher. They learned fast; but there was a good deal for them to learn.

The attitude of Peter will be recalled. In connection with the first full and clear announcement made by Jesus of His approaching fate, this is what is said: "And Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying: Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall never be unto Thee." All his expectations were pitched to another key. His mind was not on the "things of God," but "the things of men." He had accepted Jesus and was following Jesus. Up to the full measure of his conception of what was due to Him, he was true to Jesus. But he had not yet apprehended Jesus in His sacrificial character of Sin-Bearer for a lost race. His imagination was full of the brilliancy and power of an earthly sovereignty. The plan of triumphing through the shame and pain of the cross was altogether alien to his thought.

The confusion and discouragement into which the disciples were thrown by the death of Jesus are a further evidence of their failure to understand the meaning of what He had been declaring to them. For a time it had seemed to them that all was lost. They had "hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel;" but their hope appeared to be blasted.

Touching this dullness of apprehension on the part of the disciples Luke sums it all up in a single sentence

when he says: "And they understood none of these things." The phrase—"these things"—refers to words just spoken by Jesus concerning His being "delivered up unto the Gentiles," and "mocked and shamefully entreated," and "scourged," and "killed," and "rising again the third day." These gloomy forecastings were "hid from them, and they perceived not the things which were said." They did not realize the necessity of what was to take place, and the divine way of redemption lay largely outside the horizon of their minds.

The resurrection changed all this. The Christ in whom the disciples believed and whom they followed was no longer the incomplete but the complete Christ. His death on the cross and His triumph over the grave rounded Him out into His divine fulness. There came to the disciples a new conception of the nature and largeness of His aim, and of the stress that was upon Him in accomplishing salvation for an alienated humanity and of the majesty and power of His being. They saw Him no longer in the dwarfed proportions of their own narrow conceits and blinding ambitions, but as the one who had been approved of God by power and wonders and signs, and delivered up of God in sacrifice for sin, and raised to life through the will of God, because there was no force in death to hold Him in its bonds. They saw Him in the sweep and efficiency of His large atoning thought. They saw His purpose, not merely in the blossom, but in its ripeness. In the death and resurrection the divine intent in the coming of Christ into the world had culminated and was spread out like an open book before their eyes. It was no longer Christ in the process of

unfolding, it was the full-orbed Christ which the Apostles had to present. He had been born a babe at Bethlehem and had grown to manhood at Nazareth. He had lived His sinless life and wrought His miracles and taught His doctrines. He had died on the cross of Calvary and risen from the dead and ascended unto the Father. His atoning work was done. All was fashioned into a perfect whole. The Ascension had returned upon the Incarnation and made the circle complete. The Son had fulfilled His errand to the earth and gone back to share in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

Hence the sharp change in the attitude of the Apostles toward Christ, and the new matter and accent of their message. On the Day of Pentecost and from that time forward, the burden of discourse became the death and resurrection and ascension of the Son of God. The testimony was to the saving energy of Jesus through His dying on the cross and His victory over the grave and His seat at the right hand of the Father.

These men did not forget the severe ethics which Jesus had taught. Most strenuously did they insist on righteousness. It was to be righteousness in the individual and righteousness in social and business relations and righteousness in all spheres of life. If anybody thinks otherwise let him read the repeated utterances and epistles of Peter and James and John, as well as what we have from the Great Apostle. There was no abatement in the demand for morality.

But the emphasis was on the crucified and risen

Christ. It was not a different Christ which was set forth; but it was the whole Christ. It was the whole Christ, because the whole Christ was now before them. It was Christ in the completeness of His mission. It was Christ, not alone as Prophet, but it was Christ as Priest, and as Priest glorified through suffering into Kingship. It was the Christ of whom our Lord Himself spoke when, after the resurrection, He fell in with the two discouraged disciples who were on their way to Emmaus. "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

With a full Christ to preach and preaching a full Christ, the Apostles had power, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and the rest of the Apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" It was in the atoning and risen and exalted Christ that the convicting energy was lodged. Peter might have held forth the Christ who had illustrated such divine sweetness in His daily life, or the Christ of the lofty teaching and matchless character, or the Christ who had wrought miracles of healing and comfort; but he did not. The Christ whom Peter preached was the Christ who had suffered on the cross and rent the bonds of death asunder and gone back through the cloud into the heavens. It was the humiliated but exalted Saviour who was proclaimed on that great occasion. The full Christ thus pre-

sented touched the consciences of men and made them feel the need and the blessedness of salvation.

Studying the Day of Pentecost from these three points of view, the very remarkable Prayer-Meeting which was held, the openness of the hearts of the disciples to receive the Spirit and the descent of the Spirit upon them, and the full Christ which the Apostles had to preach, we get some clear understanding of that wonderful exhibition of divine grace and energy. But in the facts reviewed and the conclusions reached in this study are there not pertinent suggestions for believers in our own times and circumstances? Indeed, do we not have here in definite outline the three conditions which must be observed by all followers of our Lord before we can look for anything like a large ingathering of souls into the Kingdom?

Take union in prayer by believers. The question may well be asked and seriously pondered whether the churches of our Lord in these modern days make enough of the prayer-meeting.

When we think of the promise made by the Master to any two or three who may be gathered in His name, and when we recall what followed the united and importunate supplications of those disciples who were assembled in that chamber in Jerusalem, how marvelous seems the results which might be brought about by any company of sincere and determined believers in any of our churches. Can a shortcoming so serious and general seem otherwise than blameworthy in the divine estimation? There are possibilities sacred and tremendous lodged in prayer. How precious the promise associated with united prayer. The agree-

ment of two in asking for any proper object of prayer has the pledge of our Lord of a blessing from the Father.

There is reason to fear that private communion with God is not so habitual with Christians as it once was. Family devotions are not so common. In many a home where morning and evening sacrifices were formerly a part of the domestic economy the altar of prayer has fallen into decay. Throughout the church the neglect of large numbers nominally Christians ever to be present at the gatherings for prayer is marked and painful. They are at clubs; they are at parties; they are at places of amusement; they are wherever business or politics or inclination or pleasure may call; but not at the prayer-meeting. Everywhere else, they are never with their brethren in those social religious circles where sin is confessed, and thanksgivings are rendered, and holy aspirations are kindled, and bleeding, burdened hearts are comforted, and mighty cries are sent up to God for help.

Not until there is a radical change in this respect, and there are more of the disciples of our Lord who are ready to unite in strong and persistent crying unto God for an outpouring of His Spirit, will there be any widespread revival in the churches, or any deep and abiding impression of the reality and power of the truth of God on the world. It was not an arbitrary command which our Lord made when He bid His followers tarry where they were till they had received their baptism and enduement from on high: nor was it an irrational instinct which led them to obey the command by coming together and continuing in prayer.

day after day till the blessing descended ; but it was all in accord with the reasonable methods of the divine mind. God loves to answer prayer ; but there must be prayer before there can be an answer.

The same is true of the power of the Spirit. Is not the crying demand of the hour for the Spirit and for Spirit-filled men ? It is not for the Spirit in some vague and intangible fashion of presence, but the Spirit embodied in living men and speaking through their lips and deeds. There are bright men and scholarly men and forceful men in plenty, but what is wanted is more men whose distinctive mark is that they are Holy-Spirit men.

A re-enactment in their physical aspects of the scenes of the Day of Pentecost is not to be expected. As at the birth of Jesus there were supernatural demonstrations such as befitted the manifestation of God in the flesh ; and as at the death of Jesus there were overbroodings of darkness and convulsions of nature, as if to express the sympathy of the universe with the sufferings of Him who was expiring on the cross ; so at the inauguration of the Church which Jesus came to found, and which was to be an organ of Divine Thought and a perpetuation of the Divine Life through the centuries, it was in accord with the fitness of things and in keeping with great precedents, that there should be exhibitions of marvelous energy to signalize what was taking place and make it a unique and conspicuous event in the history of human redemption. Still there is no ground for anticipating a repetition of these outward and startling displays. These displays were once for all.

Nevertheless, the Spirit whose quickening and energizing influence was shown to such an extraordinary degree on the Day of Pentecost is what the Churches most need in the present transition period. He is needed in pulpits and He is needed in pews.

Nothing is easier than falling into terms of cant in speaking of the Spirit and His work. It is one of the unfailing resources of a class of men who have little brain and less character to go to talking about the Spirit. Talk of this kind is cheap not only, but it carries with it an air of sanctity which makes it seem ill-natured and almost irreverent to controvert it or question its sincerity. We have all of us heard men who were not above suspicion reciting with an ease and volubility which were simply shocking their threadbare commonplaces about the need of the Spirit.

It remains a fact, however, that the baptism of the Spirit is the immediate and pressing requirement of the church. If men who handle the Word are to be men of spiritual power; if men who stand in the fellowship of believers and constitute the visible "body of Christ" are to be men of spiritual minds and of positive Christian influence in the world; and if the truth, whether uttered by preacher or teacher or friend speaking with friend, is to have the vitality and force of something divine, mind and heart alike must come into receptive relations with the Spirit and under the guiding and quickening energy of the Spirit. The subtle mischief which is wrought by the materialism of the age will not be met and overcome, and the temptations so manifold to yield to lives of self-indulgence and

pleasure will not be successfully resisted, until our churches are more thoroughly pervaded and controlled by the Divine Spirit.

We are sometimes told in tones half flippant, or with an air of patronizing superiority, that if Jonathan Edwards or Charles G. Finney were back here and were to preach the same sermons which had such a memorable effect in his day, these sermons would fall flat. The people would doze through them, so we are confidently assured, and then go home unmoved either by their logic or their passion. Ah, but suppose Jonathan Edwards or Charles G. Finney were back here living his life as of old in the Spirit and uttering his discourses as of old in demonstration of the Spirit, is it quite so certain that there would be no old-time results following his words? We turn the pages of the musty volumes of the earlier mighty man of Northampton and the later mighty man of Oberlin, and we are pleased to call what we find there "dry bones." Be it so. Even the freshest and most modern sermons are but "dry bones" unless they are made alive by the Spirit of God.

Forms vary. Tastes change. Thought commands a wider sweep of facts and moves out in new channels and clothes itself with fresh illustrations from century to century. Life grows larger and the outlook wider as the years roll on. It would require a vast deal of accommodation to new habits of thinking and speaking before Isaiah or Socrates could make himself feel quite at home under our modern civilization. But whatever the land, whatever the age, whatever the stage of development, the Spirit is a necessary factor in pro-

ducing spiritual results. It is the Spirit which enables men to speak the truth which saves with a convincing and constraining energy. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

How essential, too, is the full Christ. In a full Christ faithfully preached there is great power. In a minified Christ there is little power.

Scholarship is good. There must be no quarrel with investigations the most searching and profound. Criticism, whether higher or lower, if it be sincere and reverent, is not to be frowned upon, but heartily commended. But any treatment of the record as a whole or in detail by which Christ is belittled may well excite our suspicions; for under this process Christ is not only stripped of His glory, but He is robbed of His power. Men may say, if they must, that they can no longer assent to the claim of the immaculate conception of Jesus, or of His miracle-working energy, or of His resurrection from the dead; but let them no longer look for the power which the name of Jesus had as Peter uttered it on the Day of Pentecost.

In these recent years, the cry has been back to Christ. Let it be back to Christ by all means; only let it be back to the full Christ. Let it be back to the Christ who died and rose again. James Buchanan had the same constitution with which to deal that Abraham Lincoln had; but the former made that great instrument a mere rope of sand, while the latter made it the indissoluble bond of an enduring union. Strauss had the same Christ to write about and the same materials on which to base his estimate that Neander had; but the Christ of Strauss has no attraction for the world and

no place in its living and vitalizing forces, while the Christ of Neander wins His way into the affections and takes the souls of men captive. Mischief may be done in the name of scholarship as well as in the name of liberty and religion. When one takes simple and clear passages of Scripture and twists and tortures them until they are made to mean just the least possible rather than the most possible, these passages lose much of their healing virtue. There is a microscopic and there is a telescopic scholarship. Both have their uses. But when observations are to be made on vast bodies moving through vast spaces the larger instruments must be called into requisition.

Dr. Dale in his *Fellowship With Christ* has a passage of weight on this point. "Paul's Gospel," so he says, "began with the sufferings and death of Christ; and Peter found the very substance of the Gospel in the declarations of the sufferings of Christ and the glories which followed them. Whether we are preaching the Christian Gospel in foreign lands, or to our own fellow-countrymen who have not yet received it, we shall do well to be faithful to the apostolic tradition. We should tell them that Christ died for all men, and died for the sins of all men; and that His sufferings and death are the ground of the actual relations between all men and God." These words are profoundly true. Peter on the Day of Pentecost, and Paul after him, preached the full Christ, and there was a tremendous grip in the truth they uttered. They preached the full Christ and large numbers heeded and were saved. The turning point in every great reformation

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and revival in the church has been the preaching and acceptance of the full Christ. Christ as He was unfolded and urged upon men—full-orbed and complete—on that august occasion when throngs were pierced to the heart and converted and the Christian Church was organized and set on its beneficent and victorious way, is now and evermore the power of God unto Salvation.

